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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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MODI ENDS SOUTH SOJOURN NEAR DHANUSHKODI

Prime Minister completed his spiritual journey with a Ramayana link ahead of Ayodhya temple opening

Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a visit to Arichal Munai point on Sunday **PHOTO: PTI**

RAMESWARAM, 21 JAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday completed his spiritual journey to temples with a Ramayana link in southern parts of the country by worshipping at a Lord Ram shrine near Arichal Munai, where he prayed and paid floral tributes at seashore.

Marking completion of his visits to temples ahead of the consecration of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya Modi performed pooja and had darshan at the Sri Kothandaramaswamy temple, which is on the way towards Dhanushkodi and Arichal Munai. Kothandaramaswamy in Tamil denotes Lord Ram with bow and arrow. He laid flowers on the Arichal Munai beachfront and also paid floral tributes at a pillar with the national emblem. Modi performed 'pranayama' (breathing exercise) at the beach and offered prayers using the sea water. Earlier this week, he prayed in temples in Andhra Pradesh and Kerala that have a Ramayana relevance.

Following his visit to the Kothandaramaswamy temple and Arichal Munai, he reached Madurai and boarded an aircraft to New Delhi. Temple priests said Modi carried with him 'kalash' of holy waters from Tamil Nadu. *—PTI*

AIIMS Delhi reverses decision to shut till 2:30 pm

New Delhi, 21 Jan

All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here will remain open on Monday, reversing its earlier decision to shut Outpatient Services services till 2.30 pm on the occasion of the consecration ceremony at Ram temple. "All clinical services including the OPDshall remain open to prevent any inconvenience to patients and to facilitate patient care services," it said. *—PTI*

Modi has no time for burning Manipur: Cong

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

Congress on Sunday attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi after he greeted the people of Manipur on their statehood day, saying he has expressed his wishes through social media but 'has not found time nor thought it necessary' to visit the state which has gone through so much pain and agony since 3 May last year.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh also said violence persists and social harmony has been destroyed in the state, and alleged that the PM maintains his silence and refuses to meet political leaders and parties from the state.

In a post on X, Ramesh said, "The Prime Minister tweets on Manipur Statehood Day but has not found time nor thought it necessary to visit the state which has gone through so much pain and agony since May 3rd, 2023."

"The distress of the people of the state continues. Violence persists. Social harmony has been destroyed. But the PM maintains his silence and refuses to meet political leaders and parties from the state," Congress General Secretary in-charge communications said. *—PTI*

Jairam Ramesh **PHOTO: PTI**

> **The Prime Minister tweets on Manipur Statehood Day but has not found time nor thought it necessary to visit the state which has gone through so much pain**
>
> -Jairam Ramesh
> Congress General Secretary

READY FOR RAM

Police keep tight vigil in view of the consecration ceremony or "pran pratishtha" of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, in Bengaluru on Sunday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

In the pictures, the premises of the under-construction Ram Temple can be seen in the middle of the holy city of Ayodhya **PHOTO: ISRO**

ISRO posts satellite image of temple

BENGALURU, 21 JAN

Hyderabad-based National Remote Sensing Centre of ISRO has provided a glimpse of the newly built Ram Temple in Ayodhya from space. Taken from the Indian Remote Sensing Satellite hovering over space, the image shared by ISRO on Sunday shows the new temple.The image, taken on 16 December, last year, also shows Ayodhya Railway Station and the Sarayu river. *—PTI*

Security beefed up in Mangaluru

MANGALURU, 21 JAN

Ahead of the inauguration of the Ram temple in Ayodhya on Monday, comprehensive security arrangements have been made in Mangaluru city to ensure the smooth conduct of associated events and to prevent any untoward incidents. The Mangaluru city police commissionerate, in a communique said precautionary measures have been taken to uphold public interest and maintain law and order. A total of 186 places have been identified within the commissionerate limits where poojas and religious functions have been planned.

Adequate staff and officers are deployed round the clock at 131 sensitive places and picketing points within the city limits. A total of 57 vehicles (sector mobiles) have been employed to make continuous rounds within the city and immediately attend any event.

Checkpoints have been set up at 14 points in the city to attend to exigencies. Special rounds have been planned during the early morning and late-night hours. Anti-sabotage checks will be carried out at important places within the city involving large gatherings of people. *—PTI*

TN has 'barred' Ram pooja in temples: FM

CHENNAI, 21 JAN

Citing a Tamil daily's reportage, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday alleged that the Tamil Nadu government administered temples have barred pooja for Lord Ram on the day of the consecration of the grand temple in Ayodhya, which was dismissed by the state as a false news with ulterior motives.

Sitharaman, in a post on X alleged: "TN govt has banned watching live telecast of #AyodhaRamMandir programmes of 22 January. In TN there are over 200 temples for Shri Ram. In HR&CE managed temples no pooja/bhajan/prasadam/annadanam in the name of Shri Ram is allowed. Police are stopping privately held temples also from organising events. They are threatening organisers that they will rip off pandals. Strongly condemn this anti-Hindu, hateful action." The Union Minister tagged the Tamil newspaper's report in this regard. *—PTI*

PHOTO: SALAR

Footballer Monish K dies in road accident

Bengaluru, 21 JAN

Bengaluru football community is mourning the sudden death of talented player Monish K, aged 27, who died in a road accident late Saturday night. According to KR Puram police, Monish was riding a two-wheeler near Ramamurthy Nagar flyover when he collided with a lorry and sustaining severe injuries. Rushed to the nearest hospital, he tragically succumbed to his wounds. Hailing from Babusapalya, Monish was a footballer who played for various clubs such as Parikrama FC, Deccan FC, and Young Challengers FC. He furthered his passion by acquiring a coaching licence from the All India Football Federation in 2019. Currently, Monish was playing for Bengaluru Eagles FC in the prestigious BDFA-A Division League Championship. News of his death sent shockwaves through the football fraternity. He will be remembered as a skilled player. Though his life was cut short, he leaves behind a legacy passion for football. A police complaint has been registered. *—Salar News*

NO HOLIDAY ON 22 JAN: K'TAKA CM

BENGALURU, 21 JAN

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday said there will be no holiday on Monday on account of Ram Mandir inauguration in Ayodhya. He told reporters in Tumakuru that a special pooja will be held at temples under Muzrai department on Monday.

"I am inaugurating a new Ram temple in Mahadevapura constituency," he said. For the past two days, State BJP leaders called Siddaramaiah an anti-Hindu for not declaring 22 January as a government holiday. BJP and JD(S) demanded that a holiday should be declared. Leader of Opposition R Ashoka and Legislative Council Opposition leader Kota Srinivas Pujari had written a letter to Siddaramaiah requesting to declare holiday on Monday. *—Salar News*

Plane crashed in Af not Indian: Govt

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

A small aircraft that crashed in Afghanistan did not belong to any Indian carrier and the plane did refuelling at the Gaya airport while it was flying to Moscow from an airport in Thailand, the government said on Sunday.

Amid reports that it was an Indian plane that was involved in the crash, the Civil Aviation Ministry said the aircraft was registered in Morocco.

"As per available information, the crashed aircraft is a DF-10 (Dassault Falcon) small aircraft registered in Morocco. It is not an aircraft of Indian carriers.

"The aircraft was an air ambulance and was flying from Thailand to Moscow and did refuelling at Gaya airport," the ministry said in a statement.

A source in the know said the plane had started from Utapao airport in Thailand.

Ministry on X said,"unfortunate plane crash that has just occurred in Afghanistan is neither an Indian Scheduled Aircraft nor a Non-Scheduled (NSOP)/Charter aircraft. It is a Moroccan-registered small aircraft. More details are awaited".

The plane had been operating as a charter ambulance flight on a route from Gaya, India, to Tashkent, Uzbekistan, onward to Zhukovsky International Airport in Moscow, as per the report. *—PTI*

SHARAVATHI RIVER

BWSSB to get water from Sharavathi

BENGALURU, 21 JAN

Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) will get 15 TMC ft water from Sharavathi River to tide over the crisis in the City.

The rapid expansion of the urban landscape has heightened the demand for water. BWSSB Chairman Ram Prasath Manohar V, said, "We are planning to propose extracting water from both Yettinahole and Sharavathi to meet the demand till 2035. An expert panel, led by former BWSSB chief BN Tyagaraj, is assessing the feasibility of piping Sharavathi water from Linganamakki to Bengaluru."

Despite BWSSB supplying 1,450 MLD to Bengaluru per day, a daily shortage of 350 to 450 MLD persists.

The proposal to get water from Sharavathi includes the controversial Yettinahole project and the plan to get 12 TMC ft from Krishna River. However, environmentalists are concerned about the impact on biodiversity. Poor monsoon has resulted in dry borewells and water scarcity in the City. BWSSB plans to rejuvenate 10,800 public borewells.

Meanwhile, government has sanctioned Rs 392 crore for six multi-village drinking water projects to provide clean drinking water to 3,27,192 in 125 villages. According to a press release, 26 villages in Dakshina Kannada will receive Rs 245 crore, 125 villages in Mysuru will get Rs 200 crore and 10 villages in Haveri district will get Rs 44 crore. *—Salar News*

BWSSB plans to rejuvenate 10,800 public borewells **PHOTO: PTI**

DELAYED CONSTRUCTION

Ejipura flyover puts shop owners in dire straits

HADIYA NOORAIN
BENGALURU, 21 JAN

The Ejipura flyover construction project, which was meant to ease transportation on the stretch, has taken a toll on the local businesses and communities surrounding it. The flyover, under construction since 2017, has become more than just a symbol of progress — it has become a source of frustration and financial strain for the shop owners and residents in its vicinity.

The site is surrounded by barricades, cutting off direct access to shops and houses. People are forced to take lengthy detours due to the barricades, inconveniencing residents and discouraging potential customers from exploring nearby businesses. This has resulted in a decline in foot traffic as well, leading to financial losses for the shop owners. Syed Imtiyaaz, the owner of Universal Furniture in Ejipura, said, "We have been facing a loss of around Rs 5 lakh every month due to the flyover construction; just remove the barricades and it eases our woes."

The construction of the flyover stated in 2017 **PHOTO: X/ BBMPCOMM**

Another issue is the mounting trash. "Debris, household waste, beer bottles and dead dogs are being thrown on the roadside, creating an eyesore.

The bad odour has attracted rats, which enter shops and damage stored items," said Dandapani, the resident and owner of New Caprius Bean Bag Enterprises on 100 Feet Inner Ring Road, Ejipura.A group of residents, including Dandapani, has filed complaints with Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) about the trash. "But, there has been a lack of action from the civic authority. The flyover also contributes to traffic problems which become worse during rains."

Many are starting to doubt the way the flyover project was planned. "The nearest metro station (from Koramangala) is about 8km away. Other than constructing a flyover, the government could have constructed an underground metro line," said Shree Gangadar, a resident.

A BBMP official said: "We haven't received any complaints from commercial establishments on suffering losses."

The construction of the 2.5km flyover connects southeast Bengaluru to the east and west. After multiple contractors failed to finish the flyover, BBMP handed over the tender to Hyderabad-based firm BSCPL Infrastructure Ltd. As the project unfolds under the new management, its impact remains a problematic issue for both residents and stakeholders alike. *—Salar News*

B'luru South Constituency to light up with diyas

BENGALURU, 21 JAN

Bengaluru South constituency will light up with lakhs of diyas on the occasion of Pran Pratistha of Ayodhya Ram Mandir. There will be bhajan programmes and special aarti for children, who will dress up as characters from Ramayana.BJP MP Tejasvi Surya announced plans for his assembly constituency. Addressing the media, he said, "Citizens are invited to dress their children as mythological characters." Musician Vijay Prakash is set to sing bhajans, and there will be musical performances by Praveen D Rao and others. Over 500 children dressed as Ram, Sita, Lakshman, Hanuman, and other characters from Ramayana will perform dance routines. *—Salar News*

Ram Mandir celebrations unite communities

DAVANGERE, 21 JAN

Ahead of the inauguration of Ayodhya Ram Mandir, in a unique initiative in KadaraNayakanahalli, Harihara taluk of Davangere district, a women's team is adding a distinctive touch to the celebrations. In KadaraNayakanahalli, the campaign involves distributing bangles of turmeric and kumkum along with the Ram Mandir photos to women in the community. The effort aims to engage everyone, including the Muslim community, who have warmly accepted the tokens and extended their wishes for the success of the inauguration of Sri Rama temple celebrations. The sentiment echoed a shared spirituality among Indians, emphasising the unity of all gods. Hindu activists and leaders are embarking on door-to-door campaigns nationwide, distributing Ayodhya Mantrakshate and Ram Mandir photos. *—Salar News*

CCB nabs man behind handgun reels

BENGALURU, 21 JAN

Bangalore (Central Crime Branch) CCB Police has arrested 26-year-old Shashank, who made reels featuring a handgun.After arresting Shashank, the CCB police initiated an investigation which revealed his criminal history. He has a total of seven cases filed against him. These cases span over several years and locations. Notably, in 2015, he faced charges of murder at Hulimavu police station, and in 2019, another murder case was registered at Bannerghatta police station. Additionally, cases in Rajajinagar, Tilak Nagar, a kidnapping and murder case in Attibele police station, and seven assault cases in Puttenahalli have further added to the list of his criminal record.The arrest of Shashank by the CCB Police highlights their commitment to upholding law and order and ensuring community safety. As the investigation continues, more information about Shashank's motives and activities is comesto surface.*—Salar News*

Free respiratory checkup for traffic officials

BENGALURU, 21 JAN

A free respiratory checkup by Vaayu Chest and Sleep Specialistswas held to provide screenings for Bengaluru Traffic police officials on Sunday in Jayanagar.The clinic screened about 600 traffic policemen and treated them for various problems. According to Member of Parliament of Bengaluru South, Tejasvi Surya, who visited the spot, eight traffic policemen reported allergic rhinitis (12.5 per cent), 48 traffic policemen had Hypertension and eight of them previously undiagnosed. Further, 14 traffic policemen had asthma (2.5 per cent) - four of them with uncontrolled symptoms, 48 had Diabetes Mellitus – 50 per cent of them had uncontrolled sugars and four of them newly detected.About 54 traffic policemen (10 per cent) had symptoms of sleep apnea. *—SalarNews*

Hampi bustling with exuberance with revival of Ram Temple in Ayodhya

BENGALURU, 21 JAN

Hampi, where the Tungabhadra river is coursing through its rocky terrains in the newly formed Vijayanagara district in Karnataka, is charged with exuberance with the revival of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

With the consecration of Ram Temple taking place on 22 January, the historic region of Hampi has become all the more important as it proved a turning point in the life of Lord Rama kindling the hope of getting back his wife Sita, who was abducted by the demon king of Lanka, Ravana.

Anjanadri, the hill of Anjana where the 'strong as diamond' Bajrangbali Hanuman was born, is located in Koppal district just a few kilometers away from the capital of Vijayanagara empire. Hanuman was an ardent devotee of Lord Rama.

There is an ancient Hanuman temple on top of the hill, which is home to a variety of monkeys including Langurs.

The epic Ramayana elaborates about the unending and unwavering devotion of Sugreeva's minister Hanuman towards Lord Rama.

The Anjanadri temple management in Koppal district has made elaborate arrangements to celebrate the consecration of the Ram Temple with tourists and devotees flocking to the shrine where it is decked up with lights.

The traditional lamps will be lit at the temple for two days from Sunday and special poojas will be performed, according to the temple management.

The entire hill is decked up with decorative lights and many temporary shops have come up in view of the festivities.

—PTI

Hampi proved a turning point in the life of Lord Ram **PHOTO: PTI**

True worship of Ram is to protect women: KPCC

KPCC called on EC to monitor and enforce regulations

BENGALURU, 21 JAN

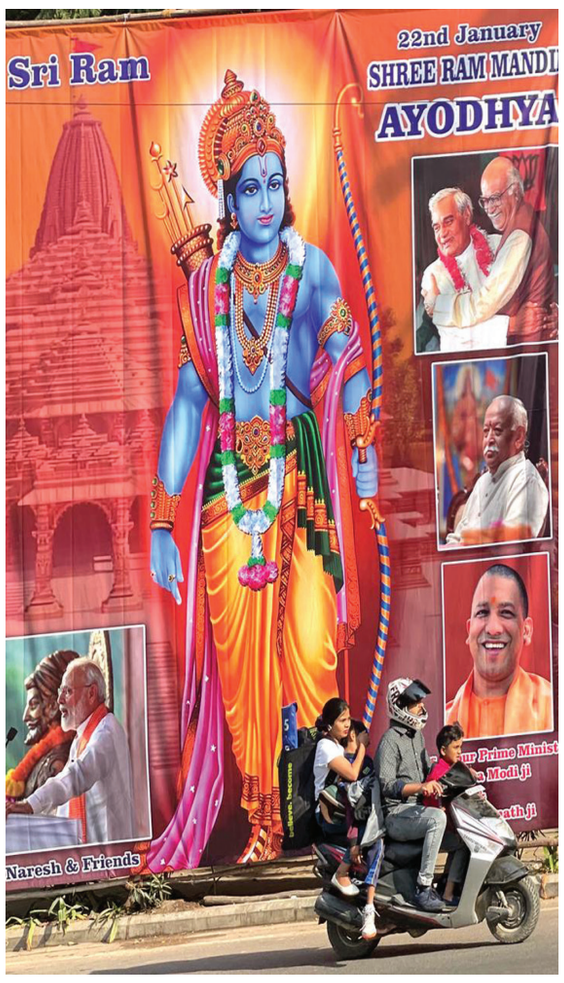
As the nation celebrates the inauguration of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) slammed the central government. It saidthe real worship of Ram lies in ensuring the safety and protection of women in the country.

Drawing attention to the upcoming elections, KPCC has called on the Election Commission to monitor and enforce regulations that prevent the exploitation of religious sentiments for political gains. Former Member of Parliament Ugrappa on Sunday said, "If the central government is true worship of Ram then you have to ensure that you maintain a political discourse that aligns with the values Lord Ram stood for, rather than using religious symbols merely as tools for electoral advantage."

Further, KPCC has raised legal concerns, pointing to Section 123 of The Representation of the People Act, 1951 3A which says any candidate attempts to use religious sentiments for electoral benefits by the promotion of feelings of enmity or hatred between different classes of the citizens of India on grounds of religion, race, caste, community, or language, by a candidate.

Ugrappa said, "The election commission should closely examine electoral practices, specifically focusing on the potential exploitation of religious sentiments for political gains."

—Salar News



KPCC has raised legal concerns, pointing to use religious sentiments for electoral benefits **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

BJP leaders urge for holiday on 22 January

BENGALURU, 21 JAN

Leader of Opposition R Ashoka on Sunday wrote to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah requesting to declare a government holiday on 22 January on the occasion of Ram Mandir inauguration.

" Since, there would be huge celebrations across the State and if people have to work,it will be chaotic and can affect the celebrations. Hence, I request you to declare a holiday," the letter read.

Ashoka mentioned that the Central government has already declared a half working day for the government employees.

"Honorable Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be participating in the inauguration. Everyone in the City is willing to participate by lighting diyas, performing bhajans and visiting temples," said Ashoka in the letter. BJP State President BY Vijayendra has been urging the Chief Minister for holiday since earlier this week. He said many states have already declared a holiday. However, Siddaramaiah has remained non-committal to declaring a holiday. DK Shivakumar hinted that a holiday will not be announced. *—Salar News*

Protest over cancellation of Laksha Deepotsava in Mysuru

MYSURU, 21 JAN

A fresh wave of controversy has erupted in Mysuru over the sudden cancellation of permission for Laksha Deepotsava, a grand celebration planned in the name of Lord Rama on 22 January.

The Mysuru Police, citing concerns about law and order, withdrew the previously granted permission for the event, leaving organisers and participants dismayed.

However, on Saturday, the police sent a letter abruptly cancelling the permission citing potential disruptions to traffic and law and order. The event was scheduled to take place near Ashoka Road in Mysuru.

Sri Ramotsava has been organised on Monday to mark the Ram temple dedication tomorrow. Notably, the police had previously allowed for the burning of giant incense sticks for 24 days but restricted burning time to only two hours on Monday. The organisers, who intended to light a 111-foot-long incense stick in front of the Anjaneya Swamy Temple in the Palace Fort, had sought permission to maintain the burning for the entire duration.

However, the police granted permission initially but cancelled the permission at the last hour and allowed it to burn for just 2 hours, instructing the removal of the incense burner within that timeframe.

The 111-foot-long incense stick, created by 18 skilled artisans over 23 days, includes various ingredients like charcoal, sticky bamboo, sandalwood powder, and ghee.*—Salar News*

Sri Ramotsava has been organised on Monday to mark the Ram temple dedication tomorrow **PHOTO:SALAR**

Nobody has to teach us devotion and tradition: DKS

BENGALURU, 21 JAN

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Sunday defended the State government's stand of not declaring a holiday on the occasion of consecration of Lord Ram's idol at Ayodhya. Speaking to reporters at his residence in Sadashivanagar, he said, "We have been practicing our traditions and rituals for a long time. We don't need to learn from others about religion and devotion." "We don't use religion for publicity. We believe that prayers yield results and hence we have ordered special pooja at all the temples under the Muzrai department even before anyone asked for it. There is Rama in Siddaramaiah's name and Shiva in my name. We know our rituals and traditions. There should be dharma in politics but not politics in dharma," said the Minister. *—Salar News*

CM inaugurates park to honour Shivayogi

BENGALURU, 21 JAN

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday inaugurated "Smriti Vana", a park built in honour of late Centurion Dr Sri Shivakumar Shivayogi Swamiji on his fifth death anniversary in Tumakuru.

Speaking at the event, Siddaramaiah remembered Shivakumar Swamiji and said he was hailed as Nadedaduvadevaru (Walking god) and the state government honoured with Karnataka's highest award Karnataka Ratna.

"I will write a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding India's highest civilian honour of Bharat Ratna Posthumously to be awarded to Shivakumar Swamiji," he said. Speaking at the same event, former chief minister and senior BJP leader, BS Yediyurappa appreciated Siddaramaiah for declaring Basavanna as the cultural leader of Karnataka.

Wildlife and Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre said, the Smriti Vana is built across 15 acres at the expense of five crores. The park consists of the writings of all the achievements of Shivakumar Swamiji. Dr Shivakumar Swamiji passed away in 2019 at the age of 111. Without the barriers of caste and religion he provided food and education to thousands of boys in Siddaganga mutt in Tumukuru.State government to support dry coconut farmers. Addressing the media after the event, Siddaramaiah said that the government will provide an additional Rs 1500 with the minimum support price of Rs 12000 given by the central government to dry coconut farmers. *—Salar News*

Dr Sri Shivakumar Shivayogi Swamiji **PHOTO: X**

₹1,500 extra per quintal to coconut growers, says CM

TUMAKURU, 21 JAN

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday announced giving Rs 1,500 from the State government to the coconut growers in addition to the minimum support price of Rs 12,000 per quintal given by the Central government.He said although there was a demand to give an additional Rs 3,000 per quintal, the government is giving Rs 1,500 to the coconut growers keeping in view its financial capacity. *—PTI*

BJP and JD(S) hold meeting on MLC polls

BENGALURU, 21 JAN

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Janata Dal (S) met on Sunday to decide the candidate for the Bengaluru Teachers Constituency by-election on 16 February.

AP Ranganath, Former president Advocates Association Bengaluru, has been decided as the candidate to contest as the candidate of BJP and JDS alliance.

The parties also discussed the six positions of the Members of Legislative Council election.

Former Chief Minister and senior BJP leader BS Yediyurappa addressed the media after the meeting at his residence in Dollars Colony. "We have only discussed the Legislative Council elections. The MLC election is here and we will face it together," said the BJP leader.

"We will get together to strengthen Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

We will fight to strengthen Modi's hand. There is a bad government in the state and it should be removed," said Yediyurappa.

Former Chief Minister HD Kumaraswamysaid, "We will inform the BJP high command leaders about our discussion on the upcoming Legislative Council elections,"

Leadersstated that an official announcement will be made after the Ram Mandir inauguration on Monday.

—Salar News

32 PDOs pulled up in NREGA scam

RAICHUR, 21 JAN

The Raichur Zilla Panchayat has taken drastic action by suspending 32 Panchayat Development Officers (PDOs) from Devadurga taluk in connection with an illegal case amounting to over 150 crores in the NREGA project.

The suspension order was issued by CEO P Rahul Tukaram, highlighting widespread corruption and irregularities in 33 gram panchayats between 2020 and 2023. The discrepancies came to light through investigations by the Auditors.

A recent FIR against two gazetted officers in Devadurga police station led to the suspension of four PDOs – Pathyappa Rathod of Jalahalli Panchayat, Guruswamy of Shawantagera Panchayat, CB Patil of Kadigera Panchayat, and Mallappa of Gandal Panchayat. Tukaram ordered a departmental inquiry against these four PDOs. However, the widespread suspensions have prompted protests from PDOs and various unions.

The Social Investigation Committee submitted a report to the government, revealing significant irregularities in 5,385 works across 33 gram panchayats of the taluk, with a misuse of over 100 crores. The report disclosed that materials for the works in these gram panchayats were purchased from a single organisation, Anna Maruteshwara Enterprises, totalling Rs. 102.32 crore. *—Salar News*

Khandre ask officers to act against factories

BENGALURU, 21 JAN

Wildlife and Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre instructed the officials to file a criminal case against the owners and regional authorities of multiple production units which were given final orders to close due to environmental pollution. Presiding over the progress review meeting of the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board on Saturday, he said that such factories are causing severe damage to the environment and strict action is essential. Khandre said that the deadline given by the National Green Tribunal for installing Sewage Treatment plan in Bellandur, Varthur and Mahadevpura lakes is in December 2024 and hence urged the officials to take immediate actions.

Khandre told the officials to collect the environmental damage compensation amount of Rs 286 crore due from the huge factories violating rules in the city. He also instructed processing the requests of new industries immediately and not to keep the files pending for a year.

The Minister also told the officials to pay attention for disposal of medical waste in a scientific method. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

NEIGHBOURS FROM FOREST VISIT CITY

Elephant herd blocks NICE road, vehicles halted

BENGALURU, 21 JAN

Vehicular movements on Bengaluru's NICE road was halted for an hour or two, after a herd of elephants were spotted during the early hours of Sunday.

Wildlife sightings around NICE Road, Kanakapura, and Bannerghatta have now become common. Leopards were also sighted along the sides of NICE road.

According to residents in the settlements near the Roerich Estate, wild animals were spotted earlier also. Kamalamma, a daily wage worker, said "Sometimes it is really scary to see these animals walking around as we do not know when they might attack." Another resident of Mallasandra, Ashok said "We stay really close to the forest and many times I've seen various wildlife flourish out here. And with human settlements right at the neighbourhood of the forest, this will definitely lead to encounters." Elephant expert and Chief Wildlife Veterinarian, Dr Prayag HodigereSiddalingappa, told Salar news "The human encroachment and lack of resources in its natural habitat makes them move to other places. And what's happening right now is the annual migration of these animals."

When asked about the elephant corridor he said, "The corridor alone won't help in this situation. They remember the pathways and now that we have encroached the space where they move around, they are forced to find an alternative route and this leads them to come in contact with the humans."

Demanding a holistic approach he said,"A tusker force is necessary to handle such situations.. The radio collaring of these giants alone is not enough. By the time the signal reaches the officials and they reach the spot, the damage would have already been done."

—Salar News

- Vehicular movements on Bengaluru's NICE road was halted for an hour or two, after a herd of elephants were spotted during the early hours of Sunday. Wildlife sightings around NICE Road, Kanakapura, and Bannerghatta have now become common

TMC trying to disrupt communal harmony: BJP

KOLKATA, 21 JAN

Senior BJP leader Dilip Ghosh on Sunday accused the Trinamool Congress of attempting to disrupt communal harmony in West Bengal by organising the 'Sampriti Michil' (harmony rally) on the day of the consecration of the Ram temple in Ayodhya on 22 January. Ghosh said that peace-loving Hindus will not be influenced by TMC chairperson Mamata Banerjee's provocations.Ghosh alleged that TMC and its predecessors have been responsible for disturbing peace and harmony in the state since 1946 by supporting anti-social elements and instigating riots.He emphasised that true members of the Hindu and minority communities would not engage in violence or be swayed by the TMC's attempts to manipulate amity for political gains. Senior TMC MP Sudip Bandyopadhyay said more the BJP engages in temple politics, the more people will become aware of their plans, leading to a decline in their vote share. *—PTI*

Man threatens to blow up Ram Temple; held

ARARIA, 21 JAN

A 21-year-old man has been arrested in Araria district of Bihar for calling up the police and threatening to "blow up" the Ram temple in Ayodhya on 22 January, a senior official said on Sunday.

Intekhab Alam, the caller, was arrested from his home at Balua Kaliyaganj in Palasi police station area late on Saturday, Superintendent of Police of Araria, Ashok Kumar Singh, said.

"The man had on 19 January dialled 112, the number on which citizens can seek emergency help. He claimed his name was Chhota Shakeel and that he was a close aide of Dawood Ibrahim," Singh told PTI."Alam said over phone that he would blow up the Ram temple in Ayodhya on 22 January ... he does not have a criminal record, but seems to be mentally unstable," the SP said.

Singh said "in view of the sensitivity of the issue", a case has been registered at Palasi police station. His mobile phone has also been seized by police. *—PTI*

SP to run fortnight campaign to rally minority support

LUCKNOW, 21 JAN

Samajwadi Party will be organising a 'PDA Fortnight' (Pakhwara) from January 26 in all the assembly constituencies of Uttar Pradesh to rally support from the backward and minority sections, a party member said on Sunday. SP national spokesperson Rajendra Chaudhary said the details of the programme will be decided in a meeting of party office bearers. During the fortnight-long campaign, the party will hold in each Lok Sabha constituency a 'PDA Janpanchayat', the date and venue of which is yet to be decided. For months, SP President Akhilesh Yadav has been championing the backwards and marginalised, which he has labelled 'PDA', or 'Pichade, Dalit, and Alpsankhyak,' as part of the party's strategy to take on NDA in the coming Lok Sabha polls. *—PTI*

Stone pelted on Ram 'shobha yatra' in Gujarat

MEHSANA, 21 JAN

Police fired teargas shells after stones were pelted on a "shobha yatra" (procession) of Lord Ram in Gujarat's Mehsana district on Sunday, an official said. The incident took place in Kheralu town on the eve of the idol consecration of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh and three teargas shells had to be fired to control the situation, Inspector General of Police Virendrasingh Yadav said."Fifteen persons have been rounded up after a combing operation at the site. Police personnel accompanying the shobha yatra took action to avert any (further) incident and brought the situation under control," the IG said.No one is injured in the stone pelting, he added.*—PTI*

Ayodhya in grip of religious fervour

It's a festive atmosphere as Ram dhun rings in streets

AYODHYA, 21 JAN

Invitees to the "Pran Pratishtha" consecration ceremony at the Ram temple started arriving Sunday in Ayodhya -- once a sleepy town now resplendent with new infrastructure and gripped by heightened religious fervour on the eve of a seminal event in India's political and religious history.

The town, about 140 km west of Lucknow, was bedecked with multi-coloured flowers as recordings of 'Ram dhun' played from loudspeakers and townsfolk dressed as Lord Ram, Sita, Lakshman and Hanuman paraded down the streets followed by delirious devotees, and news camera crews.

"Ayodhya Ram maye ho gayi hai (Ayodhya is immersed in devotion of Lord Ram)," said Shailendra Gupta, who runs a fabric store on Ram Path.

Skittish policemen kept order, urging cars to stay mobile.But they could only honk repeatedly to part the sea of pilgrims on Ram Path, many with "Jai Shri Ram" painted on their foreheads in shades of ochre and vermillion. Ceremonial gates depicting 'Jai Shri Ram' in floral patterns and illumination visible at night add to the aura of the city.

Secu rity measures in place in Ayodhya

A multi-layer security cover is in place in Ayodhya for the consecration ceremony at the Ram temple, with 10,000 CCTVs keeping an eye on the movement of people and police personnel in plain clothes deployed at the venue.

Movable barriers with barbed wires attached to it can be spotted virtually at every prominent crossing in the city, as policemen use them to regulate traffic especially during VVIP movements. *— PTI*

Artists perform ahead of the consecration ceremony of Ram Temple, on Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

Holiday on 22 Jan in Himachal: CM

SHIMLA, 21 JAN

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Sunday announced a public holiday on 22 January in view of the consecration ceremony at the Ram temple in Ayodhya. He also appealed to the people to light earthen lamps at home on the occasion. *—PTI*

Bars to be shut in U'khand

DEHRADUN, 21 JAN

7,500 saplings of flowers brought from Maharashtra have been planted in the premises of the Ram temple for a visual treat to devotees visiting the shrine. Saplings comprising foreign and indigenous varieties of flowers have been planted by the forest department. *—PTI*

Decoration at the ceremonial gateway leading to the newly-built Ram Temple on the eve concecration ceremony *PHOTO: PTI*

Old idol will be front of new idol

AYODHYA, 21 JAN

The old idol of Ram Lalla, kept in a makeshift shrine, will be placed in front of the new idol which will be consecrated at the temple here on Monday said Govind Dev Giri, treasurer of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust.He also said that more than Rs 1,100 crore has so far been spent in construction and Rs 300 crore might be needed to complete the work. *—PTI*

10 lakhs diyas will illuminate Ayodhya

AYODHYA, 21 JAN

Ten lakh earthen lamps or diyas will illuminate Ayodhya on Monday evening to celebrate the temple consecration.Diyas will be lit at 100 temples here, including the Ram Temple, and Ram Ki Paidi, Kanak Bhawan, Guptar Ghat, Sarayu Ghat, Lata Mangeshkar Chowk, Maniram Das Chavani, besides other locations. *—PTI*

NYAY YATRA

The vehicle was attacked and media persons accompanying the party's 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra' were "manhandled" by miscreants in Assam's Sonitpur district on Sunday *PHOTO: X/JAIRAM-RAMESH*

Cong alleges attack on Ramesh's car, media

GUWAHATI, 21 JAN

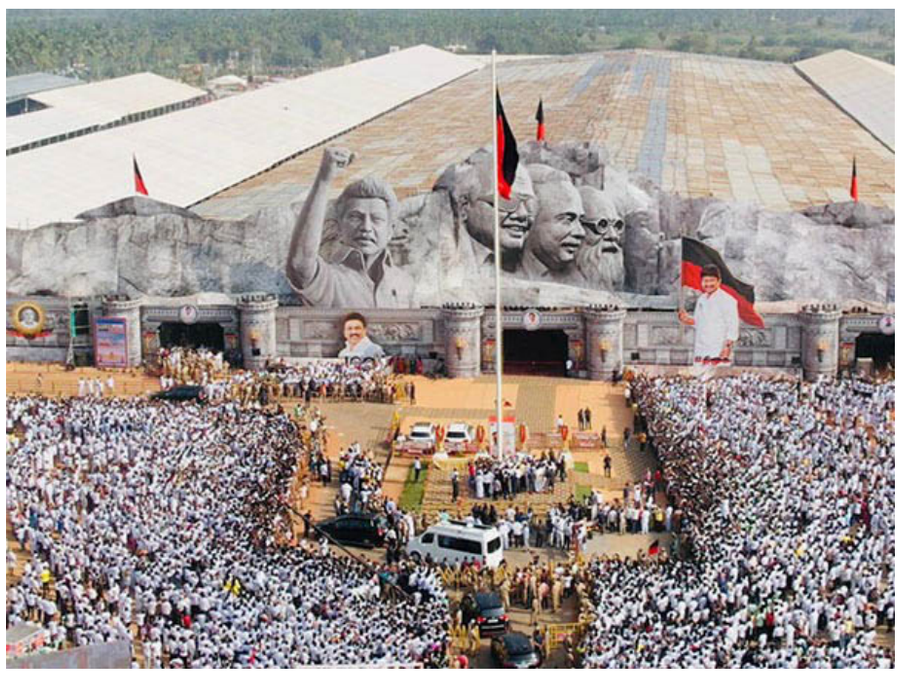
Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh's vehicle was allegedly attacked and media persons accompanying the party's 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra' were "manhandled" by miscreants in Assam's Sonitpur district on Sunday, a party leader said. The Rahul Gandhi-led Yatra is on its fourth day in the state, travelling from Biswanth district through Sonitpur to Nagaon. "The car of Ramesh ji and some others were moving to join the main Yatra entourage near Jamugurighat when it came under attack", All India Congress Committee (AICC) communications coordinator Mahima Singh told PTI. "We informed the police and the additional superintendent of police is at the location now", the AICC leader added. She said Nyay Yatra stickers from his vehicle were torn out and the attackers attempted to put a BJP flag on the vehicle, nearly breaking the rear glass. "The camera, badge and other apparatus of a vlogger who has been covering the Yatra were snatched. Members of the social media team of the party were also manhandled", she said. Singh said a BJP programme was apparently happening in the area and some of the media persons had got off their vehicles to get some visuals. "They created a very intimidating situation for us. They have refused to return the camera of the vlogger, claiming that it was not snatched," she added. *— PTI*

RaGa gives kisses amid 'Modi' chants

NAGAON, 21 JAN

As a group of BJP workers chanted "Jai Shri Ram" and raised "Modi, Modi" slogans in front of Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra bus here, the Congress leader waved, gave flying kisses and stepped down to meet them."Our 'Mohabbat ki dukaan' (shop of love) is open for everyone. 'Judega Bharat, Jeetega Hindustan'," Gandhi said in a post on X while sharing a video of the incident.Later addressing a public meeting here, the Congress MP narrated the incident and said the Congress is neither scared of Prime Minister Narendra Modi nor Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. Congress has claimed that its leaders, were targeted by BJP supporters during the Assam leg of the Manipur-to-Maharashtra Nyay Yatra.BJP, however, claimed that Gandhi was rattled after "Jai Shri Ram" and "Modi, Modi" slogans were raised. *— PTI*

DMK'S SHOW OF STRENGTH



The second state-level conference of DMK's youth wing commenced in the Attur area at Salem in Tamil Nadu on Sunday, with Chief Minister MK Stalin lighting the 'Flame of Ilajanarani' *PHOTO: ANI*

Manipur cops deny helping insurgents

IMPHAL, 21 JAN

Manipur Police rejected the allegations by Kuki organisation that security forces collaborated with insurgent groups in Moreh town where incidents of violence were reported recently. Moreh is a town bordering Myanmar and it has been alleged by the state government that miscreants from the neighbouring country are fomenting trouble in the northeastern state.

"The allegation of the Committee on Tribal Unity (COTU) and the Kuki Inpi Manipur regarding collaborations with valley-based insurgent groups and Meitei militants disguised as security force personnel in Moreh is not true. The allegations are baseless and misleading," the police said in a statement. Two police commandos were killed on 17 January in militant attacks in Moreh, while several others were injured. Kuki organisations alleged that surrendered valley-based insurgents were allowed to "mix freely" with the state police.Manipur has been rocked by ethnic strife since May last year and more than 180 people were killed. *—PTI*

Cow shelter staffer murdered in Ch'grah

KAWARDHA, 21 JAN

A 48-year-old cow shelter staffer was killed allegedly by five people, including a minor boy, in Chhattisgarh's Kabirdham district, a police official said on Sunday.It took place on Saturday night on the outskirts of Kawardha city when Sadhram Yadav was heading to his village Lalpur on a bicycle, the official said.

"The body of Yadav, who was working for more than two decades, was spotted on Sunday morning. His throat had been slit. Based on the statement of residents and technical inputs, including mobile phone location, four persons were arrested and a minor was detained," he said. *—PTI*

NEW AP CONG CHIEF

YS Sharmila assumes charge

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

YS Sharmila on Sunday took oath as the President of Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee here, in the presence of senior leaders of the party and hundreds of cadres.

She thanked senior Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge for reposing their faith and entrusting her with the responsibility. "YS Rajasekhara Reddy took up the PCC (President) post two times and went on to be the chief minister two times. Again, believing in Rajasekhara Reddy's child YS Sharmila, Congress party, Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Kharge and the elders of the Congress party have given that responsibility," said Sharmila.

Sharmila attacked ruling YSRCP led by her brother and Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, and the Telugu Desam Party (TDP).

She claimed that there had been no development in Andhra Pradesh in the last five years under the YSRCP government, and five years prior to that under the TDP's rule.

Sharmila alleged that the YSRCP and TDP governments had pushed Andhra Pradesh into deep debt of about Rs 10 lakh crore.

She said that the incumbent government does not have funds to lay roads or even pay salaries to employees.Noting the state did not receive special status even after 10 years she compared it to Himachal Pradesh and pointed out that the latter managed to attract several industries after receiving special status. *—PTI*

YS Sharmila *PHOTO:*

- Sharmila alleged that the YSRCP and TDP governments had pushed Andhra Pradesh into deep debt of about Rs 10 lakh crore

Adhir writes to Chief Secy over action against goons

KOLKATA, 21 JAN

West Bengal Congress chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury has written a letter to the Chief Secretary asking him to take action against goons allegedly from the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) party, who "manhandled" and "threatened" 'Aadhar' officials in his constituency if they defy their dictats to abandon their programme.

"I have been giving 'Aadhar Pariseva' to residents within my constituency in that, there have been sporadic violences sparked by goons, backed by the ruling party who manhandled & threatened the 'Aadhar' officials/organizers with dire consequences in case they defy their dictats to abandon the program of 'Aadhar - Pariseba'," Adhikari stated in the letter.

Chowdhury said that the incident took place at Salar Block at Murshidabad' Bharatpur-II community development block.

"This has happened in Salar Block, Bharatpur-II, Murshidabad on date. The ruling party's goons try to ransacked the venue at Salar as well as threatened further violence and/or physical abuse/dire consequences if the organizers attempt to continue with their effort"He also asked t to direct authorities entrusted to manage law and order in the district to take "immediate" and "adequate" measures to prevent any such unsocial actions by goons and supporters of antisocial elements. *—ANI*

- Adhikari has also asked the Chief Secretary to direct authorities to take "immediate" and "adequate" measures to prevent any such unsocial actions

FREE MOVEMENT

276 Myanmarese soldiers to be send back

AIZAWL, 21 JAN

India will send back 276 Myanmarese soldiers who fled to Mizoram last week following gunfights with an ethnic insurgent group, an official said on Sunday.

With this repatriation, which will continue for two days -- Monday and Tuesday, more than 600 Myanmarese soldiers who fled to Mizoram will be sent back to their country, he said.

The 276 personnel will be airlifted by Myanmar air force planes from the Lengpui airport near Aizawl to Sittwe in the neighbouring country's Rakhine state, the Assam Rifles official told PTI.

They entered Bandukbanga village, located at the India-Myanmar-Bangladesh trijunction, in southernmost Mizoram's Lawngtlai district with arms and ammunition on 17 January and approached the Assam Rifles, she said.

They were taken to the nearby Assam Rifles camp at Parva, and later the majority of them were shifted to Lunglei, she added. They have been under the supervision of the Assam Rifles since then, the official said. These 276 soldiers were brought to Aizawl over Saturday and Sunday for their transport to Myanmar from the Lengpui airport, she said.

The group is headed by a colonel, and has 36 officers and 240 lower-rank personnel, officials said. Since November, 635 Myanmar soldiers have fled their country and entered Mizoram after their camps were overrun and captured by ethnic armed organisations and pro-democratic forces, officials said.

Of them, 359 soldiers have already been sent back to their country, they said.

.*—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

500 CRPF officials tried to enter Soren's house: JMM

RANCHI, 21 JAN

Alleging that around 500 CRPF personnel tried to enter Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren's residence without "any permission" when he was being questioned by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), the ruling JMM on Sunday sought an investigation into it.

In a statement, the party claimed it was illegal and aimed at provoking Soren's supporters who were demonstrating nearby, so that they attack the CRPF personnel.

ED questioned Soren on Saturday in connection with a money laundering case linked to land deals.

Around 2,000 security personnel were deployed, and prohibitory orders under section 144 of the CrPC were also imposed around the CM's house, the statement issued by JMM general secretaries Supriyo Bhattacharya and Vinod Kumar Pandey said. *—PTI*

6 Covid deaths reported in country

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

India has logged 290 fresh cases of Covid, while the number of active cases of the infection has been recorded at 2,059, the health ministry said on Sunday. Six deaths-- four from Kerala and one each from Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh have been reported in a span of 24 hours, according to the ministry's data updated at 8am. The number of daily cases had dropped to double-digits till 5 December, 2023 but they again began to increase after emergence of a new variant and cold weather conditions.

A single day rise of 841 new cases were reported on 31 December, 2023 which is 0.2 per cent of the peak cases reported in May 2021, official sources said.

Of the total active cases, a large majority of these are recovering under home isolation. *—PTI*

338 surrender air guns in Arunachal's Lohit

ITANAGAR, 21 JAN

As many as 38 people surrendered their air guns during an event organised at Tezu, the district headquarters town of Lohit district in Arunachal Pradesh. The air gun surrender campaign is an initiative of the state's Environment and Forest department to dissuade wildlife hunting and create awareness of the ill effects of killing wildlife. Speaking on the occasion, state Environment and Forest minister Mama Natung, who spearheaded the abhiyan, emphasised on the importance of biodiversity protection in Arunachal Pradesh, home to one of the largest forest covers.The initiative got a major boost when it featured in the 84th edition of the 'Mann Ki Baat' programme of Prime Minister in 2021.*—PTI*

2 nabbed post encounter with police in UP

MEERUT, 21 JAN

In Meerut, two criminals wanted by police were arrested on Sunday after an encounter, officials said. They said the incident took place near the Kudi Kamalpur canal here. According to Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Rohit Singh Sajwan, the two were going on a motorcycle with one more person when they were surrounded by a police team acting on a tip-off. Seeing the police, the criminals opened fire and a gunfight ensued, he said. In the exchange of fire, Akash alias Harsh Giri sustained a bullet injury in his leg and was arrested, along with Jitendra alias Raju Giri, the SSP said. Sajwan said the third man, however, managed to flee. Both Akash and Jitendra were carrying rewards of Rs 25,000 on their arrest, the SSP added. Police have seized two country made pistols from them.*—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Sania confirms split with ex-husband Shoaib Malik

NEW DELHI 21JAN

Sania Mirza's family on Sunday confirmed that the Indian tennis icon and Shoaib Malik have separated a day after the Pakistani cricketer announced his second marriage to actor Sana Javed. Their split marks the end of a high-profile union that had generated huge interest among sports lovers from the two countries. The 41-year-old Malik on Saturday posted his wedding picture with Sana on social media platforms.Sania has always kept her personal life away from the public eye. However, today the need has arisen for her to share that Shoaib and she have been divorced for a few months now. She wishes Shoaib well for his new journey ahead! quote, read the statement issued by Mirza's family. *—PTI*

Govt warns against scams on WhatsApp

'Hijack', sextortion and impersonation scams are common

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

BPRD has identified frauds that trick through missed calls and video calls in the name of job offers *PHOTO: PIXABAY*

A police think tank that functions under the union home ministry has issued an advisory and alert against a variety of scams that take place on popular social media messaging platform WhatsApp leading to cybercrimes and financial frauds.

The Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD) has identified seven types of such frauds that includes tricking through missed calls, video calls, in the name of job offers and investment plans, impersonation, hijacking and screen share.

As part of the 'hijacking' scam, the eight page advisory-cum-alert said, the scammers take unauthorised access to the victim's WhatsApp (WA) account and request money from their contacts.

"Some people also witnessed WhatsApp video calls from unknown numbers. These were basically sextortion-based nude video calls which were then used to threaten the user."

"The hackers blackmail the user and ask for money in return," the BPRD said in the communication accessed by PTI.

The BPRD is a think tank on policing subjects under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

WhatsApp, on its part, has launched a number of public message campaigns in the recent past to advertise to the public about the safety features brought in by the platform, owned by technology major Meta.

The BPRD said through missed calls made from numbers starting with country codes mostly belonging to Vietnam, Kenya, Ethiopia and Malaysia, the hackers use 'code scripted bots' to find active users and then target them for various cyber threats.As part of the impersonation scam, the scammers contacts the victim pretending to be the CEO or senior officer of their organisation and target top management executives like CFO (chief financial officer), COO (chief operating officer), CTO (chief technical officer) and high-ranking police and government officers, it said.The fraudsters get personal information of the personnel they are pretending to be by surfing their social media handles and create similar profiles and seek immediate payments to some links citing their occupancy at some important meeting or a problem in their old number in order to convince the victim to transfer the funds, the BPRD said.It also published, in the alert, pictures of some WA accounts where such attempts were made. *—PTI*

MINOR'S ASSAULT

HC declines plea of rape survivor to end pregnancy

JAIPUR, 21 JAN

PHOTO: PTI

- The survivor was allegedly raped by her father and and filed the plea through her maternal uncle. The plea stated that the girl does not wish to give birth

The Rajasthan High Court has declined a plea of a 11-year-old rape survivor to terminate her 31-week pregnancy, saying a fully developed foetus also has the right to life and live a healthy life without any abnormalities.

The court observed that any attempt to terminate the pregnancy at this advanced stage is likely to lead to a premature delivery and the same may affect the neurotic development of the unborn child.

The survivor was allegedly raped by her father and and filed the plea through her maternal uncle.

The plea stated that the girl does not wish to give birth to such a child as it would be a constant reminder of the atrocities committed on her and would not be good for her mental health and social well-being.

A bench of Justice Anoop Kumar Dhand, in an order on Wednesday, said the delay by the child in approaching the court has only further aggravated the said aspect of termination of pregnancy.

There is no material available on the record on the basis of which this court may differ with the opinion expressed by the medical board.

"The medical board is in the opinion that abortion at such an advanced stage would endanger her life. The court observed that any attempt of termination of pregnancy at this advanced stage is likely to lead to a premature delivery and the same may affect the neurotic development of the unborn child.

The fully developed foetus also has the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution of India to enter in this world and live a healthy life without any abnormalities," the court order said.

The victim's lawyer Fatehchand Saini said the FIR was lodged by her maternal uncle against the child's father under sections of Indian Penal Code Section 376 (rape) and sections of POCSO Act.

The victim's father is an alcoholic while mother is mentally challenged.

A case has been registered in the matter at the Shahpura police station in Jaipur Rural. *—PTI*

Cold wave persists in North; Bihar mulls opening schools

PATNA, 21 JAN

Bihar education dept ask authorities to revoke order suspending lower classes due to cold wave *PHOTO: PTI*

The Bihar education department has asked authorities of several districts to revoke an order in which they have invoked prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) to direct schools to suspend lower classes due to the prevailing cold wave.The District Magistrate (DM)s should have sought permission before issuing the order, Additional Chief Secretary (ACS) in charge the of education department KK Pathak said in a missive to all divisional commissioners.

"The District Magistrates may be asked how their prohibitory orders become applicable to schools, but not coaching institutes, and other public places like cinema halls, commercial establishments," Pathak said in his letter.When the order invoking Section 144 of the CrPC is passed, it must be kept in mind that such an order should pass judicial scrutiny, the letter issued on Saturday said.

Cold conditions prevail in Punjab, Haryana

Cold conditions continued to persist in Punjab and Haryana on Sunday, with moderate to dense fog reported from most places in the two states.Hisar in Haryana reeled from severe cold, recording a low of 2.8 degrees Celsius.In Punjab, Patiala reeled from the biting cold as the night temperature plummeted to 5 degrees Celsius.

Dense Fog in Rajasthan

Dense fog and cold wave was recorded at isolated places of Rajasthan on Sunday. *—PTI*

PRAYING FOR GOOD WINTER

Devotees offer 'Salat-Ul-Istisqa' prayers, in Srinagar on Sunday Large number of devotees participated in the prayers seeking an end to dry weather conditions in Kashmir valley *—PTI PHOTO*

LEOPARD ENTERS RESIDENTIAL AREA IN HISAR

PHOTO: PIXABAY

HISAR, 21 JAN

A leopard entered a residential area in Hisar on Sunday and injured two persons before it was captured after a multi-agency seven-hour rescue effort, officials said.

The leopard was spotted by a hawker selling newspapers around 7am in Rishi Nagar. Later, the leopard was seen in CCTV footage of the area, they said.According to officials, teams from many departments, including the forest department, police force, fire and emergency services, were deployed in Rishi Nagar to catch and rescue the leopard.It remained unclear from how the leopard entered the city and made its way into the residential area.

The rescue team's guard Manjeet and another employee Bablu were injured in an attack by the leopard when the team attempted to catch the animal from a warehouse, officials said.The leopard jumped over a wall in the warehouse and attacked a woman on the street outside but she narrowly escaped, they said.Hearing the noise of the crowd gathered there, the leopard then entered a house. Police said that the administration also arranged a trap to catch the leopard but when it was not successful, it was hit with a tranquiliser dart.

When the leopard became unconscious, rescue teams caught it, officials said. *—PTI*

- The leopard was spotted by a hawker selling newspapers around 7am in Rishi Nagar

NGT forms panel for Ganga pollution

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

- The tribunal was hearing a petition that said the Magh Mela is being organised till 8 March this year

The National Green Tribunal has formed a panel to ascertain the correct factual position and take remedial action regarding a petition claiming the discharge of polluted water into the Ganga in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj.

The tribunal was hearing a petition that said the Magh Mela is being organised till March 8 this year in Prayagraj but around 50 drains are discharging polluted water for about eight kilometres from the Rasulabad locality to Sangam -- the confluence of the Ganga and the Yamuna.

It also claimed that around 10 sewage treatment plants are not functioning properly and that the river's colour has become "blackish" because of the pollution.

A bench of National Green Tribunal Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava said the plea raised "a substantial issue relating to compliance with environmental norms".

The bench, also comprising Judicial Members Justice Sudhir Agarwal and Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi and Expert Member Afroz Ahmad noted that the larger issue regarding the Ganga's pollution and the issue of sewage discharge into the Yamuna and the Ganga is being considered by the tribunal.But as the plea is regarding the ongoing Magh Mela, the bench said it is constituting a joint committee to look into the matter.The panel will comprise the Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board member secretary and the Prayagraj district magistrate, it said."The joint committee will ascertain the correct factual position, the truthfulness of the allegations and take appropriate remedial action," the tribunal said in an order passed on 18 January.It directed the panel to submit an action-taken report within two months. *—PTI*

LG asks cops to issue new licences to shooters

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena has directed the Delhi Police to issue fresh licenses to renowned shooters with "All India" validity instead of validity within Delhi only, the Raj Niwas officials said on Sunday. This has been done keeping in mind the fact that they frequently need to travel across the country for various sporting events, they added.

The officials said that their cartridge quota has also been increased significantly from 20 to 10,000 annually with the one-time cartridge procurement increased from 10 at present to 1,000.

"Following a decisive push by the LG to rationalise and ease the licensing processes, the Delhi Police has initiated a major reform in the grant of arms licenses, till now marred by complaints of favouritism, corruption and arbitrariness.

The move apart from helping applicants at large willspecifically benefit the country's shooting sportspersons," an official said. *—PTI*

Ex-officer uses customers' FDs to play online games, ED nabs

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

ED said the probe found that Mishra "reportedly misused his position and carried out fraudulent transactions by using his system ID *PHOTO: PTI*

Immovable assets and fixed deposits worth Rs 2.56 crore of a former Punjab & Sind Bank officer have been attached after it was found that he allegedly broke customer FDs worth over Rs 52 crore and used them to play online games, the ED said Sunday.

Bedanshu Shekhar Mishra, posted at the bank's branch at Khalsa College in Delhi University's north campus, was suspended by the lender in November 2022 after the alleged fraud came to light, the central agency said in a statement.

The Enforcement Directorate case, filed under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), stems from a CBI FIR and the fraud is alleged to have taken place between 2021-22.

The ED said the probe found that Mishra "reportedly misused his official position and carried out fraudulent transactions by using his system ID and those of other staff members to unauthorisedly break the FDs (fixed deposits) of several customers including those from Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Khalsa College, Delhi University without their knowledge".

He "committed fraud and forgery with the bank as well as with the account holders of the bank and misappropriated or siphoned public money to the tune of Rs 52,99,53,698," the agency claimed.

Mishra used the "proceeds of crime for playing online games such as Monopoly, Poker, Teen Patti etc. on different online gaming websites such as Goa247.live, Indibet.com and betway."

The proceeds of the alleged crime were mainly transferred by him (Mishra) to the online gaming companies by routing through various current accounts of different business entities, the agency said. *—PTI*

ED raids against immigration racket

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

The Enforcement Directorate on Sunday said it undertook searches in Gujarat and Delhi against some "key" conspirators who used to run an illegal racket of sending Indian citizens abroad using "bogus" visas and passports.

The searches were carried out on 19-20 at 22 January locations in Ahmedabad, Surat and Mehsana in Gujarat and in Delhi. These were linked to "key conspirators" Bobby alias Bharatbhai Patel, Charanajit Singh and others in a case of aiding illegal foreign immigration, the agency said in a statement.Patel was arrested in this case by the Gujarat Police in 2022 and was also involved in the Dingucha case that took place the same year, where an Indian family of four had frozen to death while attempting to illegally enter the US from Canada.The ED case filed under various sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) stems from two Gujarat Police First Information Report (FIR)s registered against the accused under the IPC and the Passports Act for their alleged involvement in sending Indian citizens abroad illegally since 2015. *—PTI*

TO HIDE AFFAIR

Man drowns wife in Goa beach

PANAJI, 21 JAN

PHOTO: PIXABAY

- Gaurav Katiyar,29, the manager of a luxury hotel in South Goa, was arrested for allegedly drowning his wife

The death of a 27-year-old woman in Goa, for which her husband has been arrested, was due to drowning in the shallow sand waters, which are cases of homicide and not suicide or accident, a forensic department official on Sunday said citing initial probe into the case.

Gaurav Katiyar,29, the manager of a restaurant at a luxury hotel in South Goa, was arrested on Saturday and charged with murder for allegedly drowning his wife Diksha Gangwar on Friday at the Cabo de Rama beach, police said.

The accused tried to pass off his wife's death as an accident after committing the crime, but a video shot by a man exposed his claim.

The state forensic department official, attached to the South Goa District Hospital, told PTI that the initial investigation has revealed the woman died in the "shallow sand waters".

Most of the times, deaths due to drowning in the shallow sand waters are cases of murder as no one can die in such low depth waters due to drowning, unless forced to, he said.

The official said the deaths in the shallow sand waters are cases of "homicide and not suicide or accident".

He said the medical examination of the accused conducted on Saturday showed injury marks due to scratching on his chest.

"There are marks on the chest, usually when there is a scuffle. There is a possibility that the deceased tried to save her and in the process scratched the chest of the accused," he said.

Prima facie, Katiyar killed Gangwar, whom he married a year ago, over his extramarital affair, an official earlier said adding that injury marks were found on the body.

Meanwhile, a Judicial Magistrate First Class at Margao remanded the accused to police custody for five days.

Katiyar was working as the manager of a restaurant in a five-star hotel in South Goa. He and his wife hailed from Lucknow.

The Cuncolim police have registered a case on charges of murder and destruction of evidence against Katiyar, a senior police official said.

The police said the initial investigation revealed the accused killed his wife over his own extramarital affair. *—PTI*

IN UNISON

People march during a protest in support of Palestinians and calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, in Barcelona on Saturday
PHOTO: PTI

Temple to open at India's religious fault-line

Santosh Dubey says he has no regrets he helped tear down the mosque.

"It was religious work and I was put on this Earth to complete the task," he says. "There is no crime or sin in it."

More than 30 years later, where the mosque once stood a grand temple to Lord Ram, one of Hinduism's most revered deities, is about to be opened by India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi. That's controversial in a country with a secular constitution, but especially so because of the divisive history of the site.

Monday's ceremony is being seen as the informal start of his campaign for re-election this year, wooing India's Hindu majority. Across the country, millions of Hindus are gearing up to celebrate the day like a big festival, while employees of Modi's federal government have been given a half day.

Sitting in his crumbling home, in a narrow alley in the city, paint and plaster peeling off its walls, Dubey says he's proud of what he achieved.

But for Muslims, who make up India's biggest minority, the day will evoke fear and painful memories. Some will send their children out of the city, fearing tensions might be stoked when the streets fill with Hindu devotees from around the country.

"We have been betrayed once, so we feel fear," says Mohammad Shahid. "Many outsiders will come into Ayodhya and it's when outsiders come that there's trouble."

6 December 1992 was a defining moment in India's history. It was also a pivotal event in the political rise of the Hindu right-wing that's now seeking a third consecutive term in power.Many Hindus believe Muslim emperor Babur destroyed a temple that stood at the birthplace of Lord Ram and built a mosque over it more than 500 years ago.Dubey and dozens of others have faced charges and spent time in jail over the years, but no-one has been convicted for demolishing the mosque.He doesn't agree that what he did was against the law.

The compound and the building of the Ram temple dedicated to Lord Ram are decorated with flowers the day before the temple's grand opening in Ayodhya on Sunday
PHOTO: PTI

"Hundreds of thousands of men were all over Ayodhya. They had sticks, swords and tridents. Our house was surrounded by them," says Anwari Begum, now 65.

"We ran from our homes. I ran with my six-month-old baby and small children. My husband was running behind us. When I turned, I saw that he had been caught by some men. We had to keep running for our lives."The next day she found out her husband Mohammad Amin had been killed, one of at least 17 Muslims who died in shocking violence in Ayodhya that day.When she returned to her home, she found it had been burnt to the ground. In the violence that swept across India after the mosque was torn down, nearly 2,000 people were killed.

In Ayodhya, the temple site is abuzz with cranes and diggers sending dust into the air ahead of the inauguration. Thousands of workers in hard hats dot the area.It's costing $217m (£170m) to build the temple, funded from private donations, the temple trust says. The makeover of the city is being done by the government, estimated to cost more than $3 billion.Amid the construction, hundreds and hundreds of proud worshippers stream in to get a glimpse of the idols, with rituals for their consecration in the new temple already under way.

Poonam Ohri, 40, had tears of joy rolling down her cheeks. "Our dream has come true because of Modi and the BJP government. I am overwhelmed."

Prime Minister Modi has asked people not to come to Ayodhya on 22 January and to light a lamp in their homes. But he's also said everyone can visit from the next day.

And it is those days following the official ceremony which worry some in the Muslim community.

"If the government reached out to us and gave assurances that nothing will happen, that would prevent people from leaving, but so far they haven't done that," said Azam Qadri, a Muslim community leader.

It also said that evidence placed on the record proved that there was Hindu faith and belief that the site was the birthplace of Ram.It was not proved that a temple had been destroyed to build the mosque.

Court also ordered a separate plot be given to Muslims to construct a mosque. It's 15 miles from Ayodhya, overgrown and empty.

Prime Minister Modi and the BJP are expected to sweep the general election later this year following the inauguration of the temple.Most Muslims and Hindus don't think longer-term there will be more hostilities in Ayodhya.

But some see Ayodhya as just the start - disputes and court cases are already ongoing over mosques in the cities of Mathura and Varanasi, referred to many by its ancient name Kashi.

"We had to wait for 450 years to get the birthplace of Lord Ram. I hope Kashi and Mathura will be ours soon too," says Aakash Jadhav, a 21-year-old Hindu devotee. *—BBC News*

SALAR ساڈا

In a first, polar bear dies of bird flu; what does it imply?

Climate change is a threat to polar bear's survival. Now they have a new deadly challenge facing them: bird flu. It was recently confirmed that a polar bear from northern Alaska has died from the disease.

The current strain of H5N1 influenza has affected a far wider range of species than any previously recorded strain. This has included several mammal species, such as foxes, otters, mink, sea lions and seals (including, for the first time, seals in Antarctica). Cases have been detected in humans, too.

However, while some cases in mammals have been associated with large numbers of animal deaths, the few cases in humans have, so far, shown only mild symptoms or have been asymptomatic.

So, why are there such differences between species, and what are the implications of this polar bear's death for the wider polar bear population, as well as other large mammals and humans?

Influenza viruses are highly adaptable. Their relatively simple genetic code not only changes at random via mutation in the same way as truly living organisms, but also via reassortment.

This is where closely related viruses that infect the same host cell exchange genetic material to produce novel genomes. This can lead to greater adaptation for invasion, survival and replication within that host species.

This is probably how the current H5N1 strain has come to affect such a variety of bird species, with devastating effects for some populations.

Normally, large numbers of deaths associated with a disease are considered to be caused by the spread of a disease between individuals within the population.

> Very large numbers of some seabird species have died rapidly with H5N1. The likelihood of a seal or a polar bear finding and eating at least one infected bird carcass at an arctic colony suffering an outbreak seems quite high

However, very specific genetic changes are needed for avian influenza viruses to become adapted to mammalian hosts.

These changes have not yet been detected in the current strain of H5N1. Although individual-to-individual transmission cannot be ruled out for some mammalian species that have been affected by H5N1, neither can vertical transmission – the transfer of the virus via consumption.

If we look at the list of mammals that have been infected by the current H5N1 strain, we see carnivores – and particularly those that are known to scavenge.

Very large numbers of some seabird species have died rapidly with H5N1. The likelihood of a seal or a polar bear finding and eating at least one infected bird carcass at an arctic colony suffering an outbreak seems quite high.

It is easy to imagine a pod of seals finding a colony of seabirds suffering an outbreak of H5N1 and gorging on carcasses. Under these circumstances, each seal would probably ingest and inhale massive viral loads. Those massive viral loads may have overrun the seals' immune systems, leading to rapid infection and death without infection being passed between seals.

Whether the polar bear encountered large numbers of dead seabirds, one or more seals that had become infected after eating dead seabirds or some other source of virus remains unknown. The answer may be uncovered via testing of the virus and comparison with viruses found in species that occupy the same landscape. This approach is being used to track the spread of H5N1 between wild animals and poultry in the UK.

Much of this remains hypothetical – for now. The consequences of the polar bear's death for the species' populations and for other large mammals cannot be predicted with a high degree of certainty. But if genetic testing reveals that the polar bear's H5N1 remains poorly adapted to mammalian hosts, we might expect few other cases in polar bears.

Any further cases might also be closely associated with outbreaks of H5N1 in a nearby seabird colony. It also seems likely that the list of affected mammals and their geographical distribution should continue to grow, but relatively slowly. This list is likely to continue to include only carnivores – and scavengers in particular.

On the other hand, because influenza viruses are highly adaptable, ongoing surveillance of the H5N1 strain remains critically important. This will prepare us in case a new variant emerges that is adapted to mammalian hosts, potentially including humans.The consequences of H5N1 for populations of some seabirds have been devastating.

The consequences of failure to respond appropriately to a mammal-adapted H5N1 could be severe for polar bears – and for us.

Courtesy, The Conversation

The current strain of H5N1 influenza has affected a far wider range of species including several mammal species, such as foxes, otters, mink, sea lions and seals
PHOTO: PIXABAY

LETTERS

Write to us at salar@salar.news

Amid pollution in Delhi, informal sector grapples with job loss

Saroj, a 55-year-old construction worker residing near the Bakkarwala landfill site, embodies the challenges faced by informal sector workers amid the escalating air pollution crisis in Delhi.

In the wake of frequent construction bans to combat air pollution, Saroj found herself periodically unemployed for the past three months, grappling to make ends meet.

For people like her, whose primary income source is construction work, the shutdown presents a formidable financial setback.

"There has been no stable construction work since October (Diwali) and we have been sitting at home for three months now. The contractor informs us that work will only resume in a few months when the air pollution situation improves," she said.

Working in the construction industry, despite its polluting nature, has become an unavoidable necessity for these workers, exposing them to some of the most severe health repercussions.

Delhi recorded its worst December in terms of air quality in 2023. The city's average Air Quality Index (AQI) for the month was at 348, the highest since 2018 when it had reached 360.

This led to the implementation of Stage III of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) that involves a complete halt on construction and demolition work, except for essential government projects in Delhi and surrounding areas.

A recent survey conducted by Help Delhi Breathe and Mahila Housing Trust revealed that informal workers such as Saroj, particularly those residing near landfill sites in Delhi, bear the brunt of the adverse effects of pollution.

These workers grapple with challenges, including heightened exposure to outdoor activities, unfavourable working and living conditions, hazardous work sites and social discrimination.The informal sector faces a significant blow to livelihoods due to a confluence of issues such as extreme cold, air pollution, heat stress, lack of green spaces, waste burning and open drainage.

Aroud 42 per cent of respondents in the survey expressed the opinion that the government should abstain from shutting down polluting companies, emphasising the imperative of preserving jobs.The study covered 590 informal sector workers across Bakkarwala, Gokulpuri, Sawda Ghevra, Nand Nagri and Bhalswa.

Aroud 42 per cent of respondents in the survey expressed the opinion that the government should abstain from shutting down polluting companies, emphasising the imperative of preserving jobs
PHOTO: PTI

Construction workers comprised the majority of informal settlement residents surveyed at 46.6 per cent, followed by waste pickers at 10.2 per cent and street vendors at 6.9 per cent.The study revealed that the closure of construction sites not only results in job losses but also engenders uncertainty for these workers.

At 77 per cent, a substantial majority of respondents pointed to an inherent conflict between economic development and environmental protection.

Around 91 per cent reported falling sick due to deteriorating air quality. The survey further highlighted that 95 per cent of workers refrained from raising pollution concerns at their workplaces, primarily due to the fear of job loss. Constant exposure to pollution and excessively long working hours emerged as top workplace concerns for 75 per cent of the respondents.Many workers implement preventive measures at home and underscore the need for protective equipment for workplace safety.

"As construction activities are halted during high air pollution in Delhi, it is crucial to recognise how it impacts the already precarious livelihood and financial security of informal sector workers. Help Delhi Breathe and Mahila Housing Trust are diligently working to raise awareness on the issue and connect workers to social security schemes that can safeguard them," said Gurpriya Singh, a campaigner affiliated with Help Delhi Breathe, a citizen-led collective.

Mahila Housing Trust Director Bijal Brahmbhatt underscored the severe health challenges faced by informal sector workers due to Delhi's air pollution.

"Waste pickers at settlements such as Bhalswa are grappling with additional health issues, including contaminated water, toxic fumes from garbage burning, and handling toxic waste without adequate protective equipment," Brahmbhatt said.

Brahmbhatt emphasised the necessity for skill development and training programmes, to provide alternative employment opportunities and reduce dependence on waste-picking for livelihoods.

Singh of Help Delhi Breathe pointed out the complexity of the issue where industry shutdowns, aimed at combating air pollution, end up disproportionately affecting workers who contribute the least to the problem.

She emphasised the vulnerability of women workers, who often bear additional burdens such as childcare at construction sites.

"Women workers are all the more impacted due to burdens of childcare at sites. They are usually assigned unskilled tasks and are paid less than men," Singh said.

Moreover, women tend to be the last to seek health care, further compounding their social, economic and health needs, especially in the context of air pollution impacts, she added.

Simple solutions such as providing masks, sprinkling water and ensuring water and sanitation facilities can contribute significantly to the overall wellbeing of workers, she said.

Roshini Suparna Diwakar, a senior consultant with Trust underscored the importance of looking at the issue holistically, with specific attention to implementing guidelines such as creche facilities to protect children from pollution.

—PTI

PHOTO: AP

Explosion at St Petersburg gas terminal: Officials

PETERSBURG, 21 JAN

An explosion has occurred at a gas export terminal near the city of St Petersburg in Russia, officials say. The blast caused a large fire, state-owned RIA Novosti news agency said. It said the fire had been contained, and there were no reports of injuries. The cause of the fire is not known, but local media have reported that drones had been seen in the area. Both Russia and Ukraine have used drones in the current conflict. Ukraine usually does not admit such attacks. Russia launched its full-scale of invasion of Ukraine nearly two years ago, but has made little progress in recent months. Russian news outlet Shot quoted local residents as saying they heard a drone followed by several explosions at Ust-Luga, close to Russia's border with Estonia. *—BBC NEWS*

US personnel injured after attack on Iraq air base

BAGHDAD, 21 JAN

Several US personnel were wounded after Iran-backed militants in Western Iraq launched multiple rockets and ballistic missiles on Saturday (local time) targeting Washington's al-Assad Airbase in Western Iraq, said US Central Command. CENTCOM said that several US personnel are undergoing evaluation for "traumatic brain injuries" and at least one Iraqi service member was wounded in the attack. "At approximately 6:30 pm (Baghdad time) time 20 January, multiple ballistic missiles and rockets were launched by Iranian-backed militants in Western Iraq targeting al-Assad Airbase. *—ANI*

5 kidnapped Nigerian sisters released

ABUJA, 21 JAN

Nigerian police say they have successfully rescued five sisters who were held hostage after being kidnapped in the country's capital. The girls were freed in a joint police-army operation in a forest in northern Nigeria on Saturday night. They were taken from their home in Abuja earlier this month, along with another sister who was later killed. The kidnappers had demanded a ransom for their release, but the statement made no mention of one being paid. Nigerian police said the girls had been reunited with their family following the operation, which took place near the Kajuru forest in Kaduna State at around 23:30 local time (22:30 GMT) on Saturday. The six sisters, aged from the early teens to 23, were taken hostage alongside their father, Mansoor Al-Kadriyar, on 2 January at the family home in Bwari, a suburb of Abuja. *—BBC NEWS*

Davos: UAE launches Global TradeTech Sandbox during WEF

DAVOS, 21 JAN

The UAE government, during its participation in the 54th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, launched a Global TradeTech Sandbox, as part of the TradeTech Initiative, in partnership with the Ministry of Economy, the Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development, and the World Economic Forum (WEF). This came through a memorandum of understanding signed during the WEF in the presence of Mohammad bin Abdullah Al Gergawi, Minister of Cabinet Affairs, and Klaus Martin Schwab, the WEF Founder and Executive Chairman. The MoU was signed by Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, Minister of State for Foreign Trade, Ahmed Al Jasim Al Zaabi, Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development, and Sean Doherty, Head, International Trade and Investment, and Member of the WEF Executive Committee. *—ANI*

Donald Trump calls Haley Pelosi, dubbed 'mentally unfit'

Trump said Haley destroyed all of the evidence of 6 January

COLUMBIA, 21 JAN

Nikki Haley referenced Donald Trump's speech the night before, in which he mistakenly asserted that Haley was in charge of Capitol security on 6 January, 2021 *PHOTO: AP*

Nikki Haley on Saturday questioned whether Donald Trump is mentally capable of serving as president again after he repeatedly seemed to confuse her with former US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi in a campaign speech.

As she campaigned in Keene, New Hampshire, Haley referenced Trump's speech the night before, in which he mistakenly asserted that Haley was in charge of Capitol security on 6 January, 2021, when a mob of Trump supporters stormed the building seeking to stop the certification of his loss to Democrat Joe Biden.

Trump first said that Haley turned down security offered by his administration on 6 Janauary and then again mentioned Haley, adding, "They destroyed all of the information, all of the evidence, everything, deleted and destroyed all of it." Trump, 77, has accused Pelosi of turning down security he says his administration offered, but a special House committee empaneled to probe the attack found no evidence to support that claim. "They're saying he got confused, that he was talking about something else, he's talking about Nancy Pelosi," Haley said on Saturday.

"He mentioned me multiple times in that scenario. The concern I have is — I'm not saying anything derogatory — but when you're dealing with the pressures of the presidency, we can't have someone else that we question whether they're mentally fit to do this," Haley said.

- Trump has accused Pelosi of turning down security he says his administration offered, but a special House committee empaneled to probe the attack found no evidence to support that claim

"We can't."

Speaking at a Bloomberg News forum on Saturday in Manchester, Haley campaign manager Betsy Ankney referenced Haley's remarks and said Trump "made a pretty apparent gaffe last night."

"It's a distinction without a difference. It's Nikki and Nancy," Trump campaign senior adviser Chris LaCivita said to reporters Saturday night. "What's the difference?" At his rally Saturday night in Manchester, Trump said that he took a cognitive test and "aced it."

"I'll let you know when I go bad. I really think I'll be able to tell you," he added. "I feel my mind is stronger now than it was 25 years ago. Is that possible?" Trump, who won Monday's Iowa caucuses and is the current GOP front-runner, picked Haley to serve as his United Nations ambassador and has ramped up his criticism of her campaign as the year's votes have gotten underway. *—PTI*

Lot of ways to drive change in the US: Ramaswamy

WASHINGTON, 21 JAN

Vivek Ramaswamy *PHOTO: PTI*

Indian-origin former US presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy has declined to say what job he would want if former president Donald Trump made it back into the White House but insisted that there are a lot of ways to drive change in this country.

Ramaswamy earlier this week announced that he was leaving the Republican presidential race and endorsing Trump. In an interview with Fox News on Friday about a possible job in a second Trump administration, the 38-year-old biotech entrepreneur said: "There are a lot of ways to drive change in this country, inside and outside government."

"For the last few years, I've been doing it through the market," The Hill quoted Ramaswamy as saying. Ramaswamy, who campaigned as the most Trump-friendly, "America first" alternative in the Republican field, just one day after ending his presidential campaign gave a passionate speech and asked voters to vote for Trump.

> **We are in the middle of a war in this country. The country divided between those of us who love the United States of America and a fringe minority who hates this country and what we stand for**
>
> -Vivek Ramaswamy, Ex-US Presidential candidate

"We are in the middle of a war in this country," Ramaswamy said, portraying a country divided between "those of us who love the United States of America and a fringe minority who hates this country and what we stand for." "And right now we need a commander in chief who will lead us to victory," he said. *—PTI*

SIGAR stated that each cargo was worth an average of USD 80 million and was delivered to Kabul within 14 days *PHOTO: ANI*

Afghanistan gets $80M every 14 days: Report

KABUL, 21 JAN

In a newly released report, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) has highlighted that millions of dollars have been transported to Afghanistan in different shipments over the previous three months.

SIGAR stated that each cargo was worth an average of USD 80 million and was delivered to Kabul within 10 to 14 days, with the proceeds kept in private banks in the UN's accounts, reported TOLOnews.

"The State Department told SIGAR last quarter that UN cash shipments--averaging $80 million each--arrive in Kabul every 10-14 days. According to UNAMA, all cash is placed in designated UN accounts in private banks; no cash is deposited in central banks or provided to the Taliban," SIGAR stated in its report.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) indicated in its most recent report that around 69 per cent of Afghans lack access to enough resources for their basic necessities.

According to the research, Afghanistan's economy has contracted by 27 per cent since 2020, and 7 out of 10 Afghans are unable to meet their basic necessities for food, healthcare, and work. *—ANI*

2.3 MILLION PEOPLE DISPLACED

PALESTINIAN DEATH TOLL SOARS PAST 25K

RAFAH, 21 JAN

Israel continues to carry out strikes throughout the besieged territory, including areas in the South *PHOTO: PTI*

The Palestinian death toll from the war between Israel and Hamas has soared past 25,000, the Health Ministry in the Gaza Strip said on Sunday, while the Israeli government appeared far from achieving its goals of crushing the militant group and freeing more than 100 hostages.

The level of death, destruction and displacement from the war already is without precedent in the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Yet Israeli officials say the fighting is likely to continue for several more months.

The slow progress and the plight of the hostages held in Gaza has divided ordinary Israelis and their leaders even as the offensive threatens to ignite a wider war involving Iran-backed groups in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen that support the Palestinians.

The United States, which has provided essential diplomatic and military support for the offensive, has had limited success in persuading Israel to adopt military tactics that put civilians at less risk and to facilitate the delivery of more humanitarian aid.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also has rejected US and international calls for postwar plans that would include a path to Palestinian statehood.

Gaza death toll climbs amid blistering offensive

The war began with Hamas' surprise attack in southern Israel on 7 October, during which Palestinian militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took around 250 hostages back to Gaza. Israel responded with a blistering three-week air campaign and then a ground invasion into northern Gaza that laid waste to entire neighbourhoods. Ground operations are now focused on the southern city of Khan Younis and built-up refugee camps in central Gaza dating back to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation.

Israel continues to carry out airstrikes throughout the besieged territory, including areas in the south where it told civilians to seek refuge. Many Palestinians have ignored evacuation orders, saying nowhere feels safe. *—AP*

Israel PM defies Biden over Palestinian state

TEL AVIV, 21 JAN

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has refuted reports that claimed he told US President Joe Biden that he has not ruled out the creation of a Palestinian state, the Times of Israel reported.

This comes after a report claimed that Netanyahu told Biden that the public comments he made a day earlier- in which he appeared to reject the idea of creating a Palestinian state -- were not meant to foreclose that outcome in any form. "Netanyahu repeated his consistent position for years, which he also expressed at a press conference the day before: after the elimination of Hamas, Israel must remain in full security control of the Gaza Strip to ensure that Gaza will no longer pose a threat to Israel, and this conflicts with the demand for Palestinian sovereignty," the Israel PM Office said. *—ANI*

Israeli school holds day to promote tolerance

Tel Aviv, 21 Jan

The Division for Religious Testimonies in the Administration for Special Duties at Israel's Ministry of the Interior held a study day this week to promote tolerance in Israel at the "Mar Elias" High School in I'billin, an Arab city in the north of Israel. Christian, Muslim and Druze students from about 40 towns study together at the school. *—ANI*

8 Feb poll: Imran warns of further instability in Pak

ISLAMABAD, 21 JAN

Imran Khan *PHOTO: PTI*

Pakistan's jailed former prime minister Imran Khan has sought a level playing field for his party in the run-up to the February 8 general elections, saying a lack of fairness in conducting polls would lead to further "instability and uncertainty".

The remarks by Khan, 71, the founder of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, came during an informal media interaction at the Adiala Jail on Saturday. Internet users faced major interruptions during the virtual event.

The cricketer-turned-politician claimed that the PTI is facing obstacles in conducting its election campaign, with restrictions preventing the party from holding public gatherings.

He said the PTI candidates "are being harassed and detained" by the authorities to stop them from contesting elections and warned that if fair polls were not conducted then it would lead to further "instability and uncertainty", the Dawn newspaper reported. Khan said the establishment could not "dismantle the party since it has roots in the masses".

He also warned 'turncoats' that their politics would end if they parted ways with the PTI.

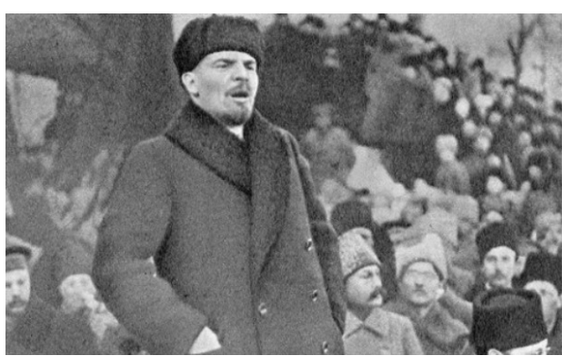
Khan also claimed that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) deliberately delayed the matter related to the PTI's intra-party elections to take "a stern and sudden action" to deprive the political party of its electoral symbol.

Pakistan's Supreme Court on 13 January stripped the PTI of its iconic 'bat' election symbol, a move after which those contesting in elections from the party will have to fight as independent candidates. *—PTI*

CENTURY AFTER LENIN'S DEATH

USSR's founder is an afterthought in Russia

MOSCOW, 21 JAN



A century later, the once-omnipresent image of Vladimir Lenin is largely an afterthought in modern Russia *PHOTO: WIKICOMMONS*

Not long after the 1924 death of the founder of the Soviet Union, a popular poet soothed and thrilled the grieving country with these words: "Lenin lived, Lenin lives, Lenin will live."

A century later, the once-omnipresent image of Vladimir Lenin is largely an afterthought in modern Russia, despite those famous lines by revolutionary writer Vladimir Mayakovsky.

The Red Square mausoleum where his embalmed corpse lies in an open sarcophagus is no longer a near-mandatory pilgrimage but a site of macabre kitsch, open only 15 hours a week. It draws far fewer visitors than the Moscow Zoo.

The goateed face with its intense glare that once seemed unavoidable still stares out from statues, but many of those have been the targets of pranksters and vandals. The one at St. Petersburg's Finland Station commemorating his return from exile was hit by a bomb that left a huge hole in his posterior. Many streets and localities that bore his name have been rechristened. The ideology that Lenin championed and spread over a vast territory is something of a sideshow in modern Russia.

- In a speech three days before the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Putin dismissed its sovereign status as an illegitimate holdover from Lenin's era, when it was a separate republic within the Soviet Union

Lenin "turned out to be completely superfluous and unnecessary in modern Russia", historian Konstantin Morozov of the Russian Academy of Sciences told the AP. Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov talks as if Lenin still was in charge: "100 years since the day when his big and kind heart stopped, the second century of Lenin's immortality begins," he said.

Putin himself appears inclined to keep Lenin at arm's length, even aiming some darts at him. In a speech three days before the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Putin dismissed its sovereign status as an illegitimate holdover from Lenin's era, when it was a separate republic within the Soviet Union.

"As a result of Bolshevik policy, Soviet Ukraine arose, which even today can with good reason be called Vladimir Ilyich Lenin's Ukraine.' He is the author and the architect," Putin said. In a speech a year earlier, Putin said that allowing Ukraine and other republics the nominal right to secede had planted "the most dangerous timebomb". *—AP*

10 INJURED

At least 25 dead in strike in Ukraine

KYIV, 21 JAN

At least 25 people were killed on Sunday by shelling at a market on the outskirts of the city of Donetsk in Russian-occupied Ukraine, local officials reported on Sunday.

A further 10 people were injured in the strike on the suburb of Tekstilshchik, said Denis Pushilin, head of the Russian-installed authorities in Donetsk. He said that the shells had been fired by the Ukrainian military.

Kyiv has not commented on the event and the claims could not be independently verified by The Associated Press. Emergency services continue to work on the scene, Pushilin said. Also on Sunday, fire broke out at a chemical transport terminal at Russia's Ust-Luga port following two explosions, regional officials said.

Local media reported that the port had been attacked by Ukrainian drones, causing a gas tank to explode. The blaze was at a site run by Russia's second-largest natural gas producer, Novatek, 165 kilometers southwest of St Petersburg.

The head of the port in Russia's Kingisepp region, Yuriy Zapalatskiy, said in a statement that there were no casualties, but that the district had been placed on high alert. News outlet Fontanka reported that two drones had been detected flying towards St Petersburg on Sunday morning, but that they were redirected towards the Kingisepp region.

Associated Press could not independently verify the reports. The Russian Ministry of Defence did not report any drone activity in the Kingisepp area in its daily briefing. *—AP*

10 people were injured in the strike near Tekstilshchik, said head of the Russian-installed authorities on Sunday *PHOTO: ANI*

Tata Motors to hike passenger vehicle prices from 1 Feb

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

Tata Motors on Sunday said it will increase prices of its entire passenger vehicle range, including EVs, by an average of 0.7 per cent with effect from next month.This increase will be effective 1 February, 2024, and is being taken to partially offset the rise in input cost, Tata Motors said in a statement.The company sells a range of passenger vehicles including Punch, Nexon and Harrier.*—PTI*

Industrial & logistics space demand hit record in 2023

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

Demand for industrial and logistics spaces hit an all-time high across eight major cities last year with leasing activity rising annually by 8 per cent, according to CBRE. In its latest report, real estate consultantCBRE said that the leasing of industrial and logistics spaces rose to 38.8 million square feet in 2023 from 36 million square feet in the previous year driven mainly by demand from third-party logistics (3PL) companies.Anshuman Magazine, Chairman & CEO, India, Southeast Asia, Middle East & Africa, CBRE, said, "As we envision the future of the industrial and logistics sector, this robust growth is a testament to the sector's resilience despite global economic challenges."Leasing activities across the top eight cities remained robust in 2023, showing a steady annual space occupancy, he said."The leasing landscape in 2023 reflects a pronounced influence of 3PL players, commanding a substantial 45 per cent share," Magazine said.The consultant noted that diverse industries, including e-commerce, retail, and manufacturing, chose to outsource their supply chain operations to 3PL firms. *—PTI*

Anarock revenue may rise 30% to ₹575cr in FY24

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

Property consultant Anarock is expecting a 30 per cent growth in its revenue this fiscal year to around Rs 575 crore mainly driven by strong housing sales, its Chairman Anuj Puri said.Anarock, one of the leading real estate consultancy firms in India, was established by Puri in April 2017."Our revenue will easily cross Rs 550 crore this financial year and may touch Rs 575 crore," Puri said.Out of the total estimated revenue in 2023-24 fiscal, he said around Rs 400 crore will come from sales of residential properties on behalf of builders. Puri said residential sales in primary market (first sale) touched an all-time high in 2023 calendar year. The demand remains strong across all price points."We expect demand to sustain in 2024 and beyond," he said, but cautioned that sales would be hit in case of abnormal price rise.Puri said the company also expects significant revenue from consultancy services in non-residential segments like leasing of retail and warehousing spaces, land deals and capital market transactions. *—PTI*

Braithwaite profitability may hit in FY24

KOLKATA, 21 JAN

The remarkable turnaround journey of Braithwaite & Co, the central PSU that built the iconic Howrah Bridge, encountered headwinds in 2023 due to leadership transition challenges.Net profit, which steadily climbed from Rs 2.6 crore in 2017-18 to nearly Rs 50 crore in 2022-23, may see a dip for the current fiscal.Till December 2023, profit stood at Rs 17.35 crore, making it unlikely to surpass the previous year's figure in the last (January -March) quarter of the fiscal."Surpassing last year's net profit in the current fiscal may not be achievable. The order book had also shrunk from Rs 2,346 crore in March 2023 to Rs 1,473 crore," officials said.Sources attributed the slowdown to the departure of Chairman and Managing Director Yatish Kumar in May 2023, after he returned to Railway service following a successful five-year stint. *—PTI*

FPIs turn cautious, pull out ₹13K cr from Indian stocks

FPIs started the year with a cautious approach in opting to book profits

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

Foreign investors have adopted a cautious approach this month in the Indian markets, offloading domestic equities worth Rs 13,000 crore in the first three weeks owing to high valuations of Indian stocks and surging US bond yields. In contrast, foreign investors are bullish on the debt market and injected Rs 15,647 crore in the debt market during the period under review, data with the depositories showed.

According to the data, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) made a net withdrawal of Rs 13,047 crore in Indian equities this month (till 19 January).

They pulled out over Rs 24,000 crore from equities during 17 -19 January. Before this, FPIs made a net investment of Rs 66,134 crore in December and Rs 9,000 crore in November.

"There are two main reasons why FPIs turned sellers. One, the US bond yield started rising with the 10-year yield rising from the recent level of 3.9 per cent to 4.15 per cent triggering capital outflows from emerging markets," VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said.

"Second, since the valuations in India are high, FPIs used the excuse of less-than-expected results from HDFC Bank to press massive sales too," he added.

The extensive selling by FPIs could be attributed to offloading their stake in HDFC Bank given its disappointing quarterly results, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director, Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India said.

FPIs started the new year with a cautious approach opting to book profits in the Indian equity markets as key stock indices touched all-time high levels, he said.

Moreover, uncertainty over the interest rate scenario also prompted them to stay on the sidelines and wait for further cues, before deciding to invest in emerging markets like India, he added.

Besides, FPIs were big sellers in other emerging markets such as Taiwan, South Korea and Hong Kong.

The announcement by JP Morgan Chase & Co. in September that it will add Indian government bonds to its benchmark emerging market index from June next year has influenced the inflow in the country's bond markets in the past few months.

In terms of sector, FPIs have been buying IT stocks this month after the management commentary following the Q3 results of IT managers indicated optimism of demand revival in the sector.

—PTI

FPIs were big sellers in other emerging markets such as Taiwan, South Korea and Hong Kong **PHOTO: PTI**

- In terms of sector, FPIs have been buying IT stocks this month after the management commentary following the Q3 results of IT managers indicated optimism of demand revival in the sector

Goods & services exports up at $765.6 B

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

Country's exports of goods and services rose marginally by 0.4 per cent to $765.6 billion in 2023 despite global economic uncertainties, according to the commerce ministry data.

Sectors which helped keep India's exports afloat include electronics, pharmaceuticals, cotton yarn, fabrics and made-ups; ceramic products, meat, dairy and poultry products, fruits and vegetables and information technology.

Goods exports in the last calendar year, however, contracted by 4.71 per cent to $ 431.9 billion while services exports are estimated to have risen by 7.88 per cent to $ 333.8 billion, the data showed. The merchandise imports also dipped by 7 per cent to $ 667.73 billion last year as against $ 720.2 billion in 2022.

The latest data for the services sector released by the RBI is for November 2023. The data for December 2023 is an estimation by the ministry. The main export destinations for India are the US, the UAE, the Netherlands, Bangladesh, the UK and Germany.

Goods shipments are impacted due to the Russia-Ukraine war, the Israel-Hamas conflict and the Red Sea trade route crisis due to attacks by Yemen-based Houthis on cargo ships.According to international trade experts, if challenges are prolonged, it will have major implications on global trade. Economic think-tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said that India's exports and imports have dipped by 2.6 per cent to $ 1609 billion in 2023 compared to $ 1651.9 billion in 2022. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Workers with basic communication skills in English and adaptability to different working conditions and cultures are also valued by the construction sector, the report added **PHOTO: X**

Workers from TN, UP, major workforce in GCC countries

MUMBAI, 21 JAN

Workers from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu constitute the majority of labour force from India in the construction industry in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, according to a report.

Going by the data of Huntr, the UAE-based marketplace connecting migrant workers with enterprises, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu are the highest contributors to the migration of construction workers from India to the GCC countries. Workers with proficiency in construction skills such as masonry, carpentry, plumbing, electrical works, and welding and having prior experience in construction projects, are highly valued by the industries in the GCC countries, the report stated.

Further, the report revealed that certifications from the National Skill Development Corporation India (NSDC) and good physical fitness are essential as well for workers who work in the GCC region.

Workers with basic communication skills in English and adaptability to different working conditions and cultures are also valued by the construction sector, the report added.

The report is an analysis based on data on Huntr platform.

Meanwhile, according to data by Huntr, these workers from India, who work in the construction industry in the Middle East, are from 20-40 years age group and mostly men.

The report also found that most of these blue-collar workers in the construction domain are from diverse educational backgrounds.

Individuals engaged in construction jobs can have minimal formal education, which increases the accessibility of such employment opportunities to a broad spectrum of people, it noted.

However, workers with technical or vocational training in specific construction trades are valued more, which showcases the importance of specialised skills in this field as well, added the report. *—PTI*

Power consumption grows 8% to 1,221.15 B units

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

Power consumption in the country witnessed an on-year rise of nearly 8 per cent to 1,221.15 billion units (BU) during the April-December period of this fiscal, indicating a surge in economic activities.

Power consumption in the country stood at 1,132.11 BU in April-December 2022-23.

Industry experts said that around eight per cent growth in power consumption in the first nine months of this fiscal year shows a surge in economic activities.

Power consumption in the entire fiscal 2022-23 was 1,504.26 BU, higher than the 1,374.02 BU witnessed in the 2021-22 financial year.

The power ministry had estimated the country's electricity demand to touch 229 GW during summer in 2023. The demand did not reach the projected level in April-July due to unseasonal rain.

PHOTO: PTI

The peak demand, however, touched a new high of 224.1 GW in June before dropping to 209.03 GW in July 2023. Peak demand touched 238.82 GW in August.

In September this fiscal year, it was at a record high of 243.27 GW. The peak demand was 222.16 GW in October, 204.77 GW in November and 213.62GW in December 2023.

According to experts, power consumption was affected in March, April, May, and June this year due to widespread rainfall.

They said power consumption grew in August, September, and October, mainly due to humid weather conditions and also perk up in industrial activities due to the effect of festive rush.

The data shows that the power demand has gone up by 50.8 per cent in energy terms from 2013-14 to 2022-23.

The peak power demand has gone up from 136 GW in 2013-14 to 243 GW in September 2023. *—PTI*

GTRI REPORT

The report said that India recognises the need to improve the functioning of the Appellate Body **PHOTO: PTI**

Consensus on WTO dispute settlement low

NEW DELHI, 20 JAN

WTO member countries are unlikely to reach a consensus next month on reforming the dispute settlement system of the global trade body as there are wide differences over the issue between developed and developing countries, a GTRI report said on Sunday. The trade minister of the 164-member World Trade Organisation (WTO) will gather in Abu Dhabi in February for the 13th ministerial conference (MC) to resolve different issues such as reforms in dispute settlement mechanisms, agriculture-related matters and a moratorium on customs duties on e-commerce trade.

"Reaching a consensus on reform of the dispute settlement system is complex, with developed and developing countries holding different priorities and concerns," economic think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said. It said that balancing India's demands for an appellate body, S&DT (special and differential treatment) provisions, and fairness while addressing other members' concerns, including transparency and legal certainty, will require significant compromise and negotiation.

GTRI Co-Founder Ajay Srivastava said that for India, reforming the dispute settlement system remains a crucial priority at the upcoming MC13. MC is the highest decision-making body of the global trade watchdog. Reforming the dispute settlement mechanism is essential, as without a reliable way to resolve conflicts between countries, WTO rules are ineffective.

"The US, a frequent participant in WTO disputes, has been obstructing the process due to dissatisfaction with inefficiencies and perceived overreaches by the WTO's judiciary," he said. Since 2017, the US has been blocking the appointment of new judges to the WTO's seven-member appellate court, leading to 29 unresolved appeals. India calls for a transparent and merit-based process for selecting members, ensuring diversity and expertise.

The report said that India recognises the need to improve the functioning of the Appellate Body and for that, it has suggested setting stricter timelines for decisions, clearer rules for judicial restraint, and focusing reviews on legal and procedural issues."Reaching a consensus at MC13 will require significant compromise and negotiation. Expect extension by two more years," it said. *—PTI*

States' loan guarantee triples since FY23

MUMBAI, 21 JAN

The total loan guarantees extended by 17 major states to their entities have more than tripled to Rs 9.4 trillion by FY23 from Rs 3 trillion in FY17, says a report.

While guarantees are contingent liabilities, they may pose a risk to states' fiscal health if a substantial proportion of the stock needs to be serviced by them, warranting robust guarantee monitoring and prudent extension of guarantees in the future so that the financial system as a whole remains resilient.

States often sanction and issue on behalf of their various enterprises, cooperative institutions, and urban local bodies guarantees in favour of their lenders which are generally banks or other financial institutions.

The total loan guarantees extended by the 17 major states to their entities have more than tripled to Rs 9.4 trillion as of FY23 from Rs 3 trillion in FY17. This is equivalent to the entire increase in such guarantees of these states during FY2017-22,Icra Ratings chief economist Aditi Nayar said in the report.In fact, such guarantees have been steadily increasing over the years, from Rs 3 trillion in FY17 to Rs 7.7 trillion in FY21 and to Rs 9 trillion in FY22.

The states excluded from the report are the Northeastern states and other hilly states along with Goa.

—PTI

PHOTO: PTI

- States sanction and issue on behalf of their various enterprises, cooperative institutions, and urban local bodies guarantees in favour of their lenders which are generally banks or other financial institutions

FOLLOWING G20

India Inc lauds establishment of gender equity Alliance at WEF

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

Indian industry on Sunday lauded the government for establishing the 'Alliance for Global Good- Gender Equity and Equality' announced on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum annual meeting 2024 here.

The idea of this alliance emerged from the G20 Leaders' Declaration and India's abiding commitment to the cause of women-led development as propounded by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

As a follow up to the activities of the Engagement Group and initiatives under the G20 framework, inter alia, the Business 20, Women 20 and G20 EMPOWER, this alliance aims at taking forward the commitments of the G20 leaders for the benefit of the larger global community, the government said while announcing the alliance.

Lauding the initiative, apex industry chamber CII's president R Dinesh said, "The leadership of India for women empowerment during its Presidency of G20 was well recognized and the launch of the 'Alliance for Global Good - Gender Equity and Equality' at Davos is yet another opportunity for us to converge stakeholders to make the world a better place for women." "We in corporate India are excited to partner with governments and companies across the globe to promote Gender Equality and strengthen Women Leadership," he added.

Aim of the alliance is to bring together global good practices, investments in the field of women's health, education **PHOTO: PTI**

- The alliance aims at taking forward the commitments of the G20 leaders for the benefit of the larger global community, the government said while announcing the alliance

Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General Confederation of India Industry said, "The launch of the 'Alliance for Global Good - Gender Equity and Equality' at Davos is a purposeful initiative with the participation of key stakeholders." "It represents a very proud moment for India and India Inc. and comes with a sense of great responsibility. The Confederation of Indian Industry is committed to bringing in Industry from India and across the globe to work towards Gender Equity and Women Leadership," he added.

The aim of the alliance is to bring together global good practices, knowledge sharing, and investments in the field of women's health, education and enterprise. Supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the alliance will be housed and anchored by the CII Centre for Women Leadership.

Given India's abiding commitment to 'VasudhaivaKutumbakam - One Earth, One Family, One Future' and its continued efforts towards SabkaSaath, sabkaPrayaas this Alliance is poised to be a force to reckon with on all gender related issues, the CII said.

—PTI

PHOTO: AP

Tai Tzu Ying Wins India Open Women's Title

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

An inspired Tai Tzu Ying secured her first women's singles India Open title with a dominating straight-game win over Chen Yu Fei here on Sunday. The former world number one from Chinese Taipei who is set to retire after this season used her cross-court smashes and delightful drops to completely outplay her Chinese rival 21-16 21-12 in the summit clash which was a rematch of the Tokyo Olympic final. On that evening the Chinese had the last laugh but Tai Tzu on Sunday showed why she is revered as one of the greatest players of the game with a masterclass performance at the KD Jadhav Indoor stadium here.Earlier Thailand s Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Sapsiree Taerattanachai claimed the Mixed Doubles title defeating World No. 5 duo Jiang Zhen Bang and Wei Ya Xin of China 21-16 21-16 in the final.—*AP*

Algeria draws 2-2 in the Africa Cup

ABIDJAN, 21 JAN

Baghdad Bounedjah has scored very late to lessen the danger of Algeria's second straight Africa Cup of Nations group-stage exit by salvaging a 2-2 draw against Burkina Faso. Burkina Faso fans were already celebrating what they thought was their team's progress to the last 16 when Bounedjah rose high to head Adam Ounas' corner past goalkeeper Hervé Koffi in the fifth minute of second-half stoppage time. It was Bounedjah's second goal of the game. The result left Burkina Faso on four points after two games, level with Angola, which beat Mauritania 3-2.—*AP*

PHOTO: PTI

Lemi, Mineswo lead in Mumbai Marathon

MUMBAI, 21 JAN

Ethiopian runners expectedly dominated the Mumbai Marathon as defending champion Hayle Lemi Berhanu and Aberash Minsewo won the men's and women's titles respectively here on Sunday. Among Indian men Srinu Bugatha recorded the best finish with a timing of 2:17:29 and was followed by Gopi Thonakal (2:18:37) and Sher Singh Tanwar (2:19:37).The top 10 elite men's runners featured two Indians with Srinu placed at the eighth spot and Gopi at the 10th.I was aiming for the course record but the last five kilometres were not good Indian Army s Srinu told the media after his win adding that he was not aware of marathon racing until 2013.—PTI

Delhi suffer another embarrassing loss

INDORE, 21 JAN

A clueless Delhi suffered another embarrassing defeat in the Ranji Trophy their second in three games this season with an 86-run loss to Madhya Pradesh in their Elite Group D match here on Sunday. The loss to MP will hurt Delhi more as they had put themselves in a strong position by bowling out the hosts for 171 on the opening day. Resuming day three at 157 for five MP managed to reach 251 in their second innings setting a 218-run target for Delhi. Delhi's batters looked ill-equipped even on decent batting conditions and were bowled out for 131 after the umpires extended play beyond regulation close of play. —*PTI*

Fritz downs Tsitsipas to set up Djokovic clash

Aryna, Gauff storm into Australian Open quarter-finals

MELBOURNE, 21 JAN

American 12th seed Taylor Fritz dumped last year's Australian Open runner-up Stefanos Tsitsipas out of the tournament on Sunday to set up a quarter-final with defending champion Novak Djokovic.

There was little to separate them in the opening two sets but Fritz stepped up a gear to beat the Greek seventh seed 7-6 (7/3), 5-7, 6-3, 6-3 in a shade over three hours.

He said the key was "just trusting my shots" and that he had served well throughout.

Fritz trails Djokovic 8-0 in head-to-heads, but he said he had improved and was relishing another battle against the top seed.

"The times I have played him I haven't brought my best level and you need to if you are going to compete with someone like Djokovic," he said.

A tight first set, in which neither player broke serve, went to a tie-break, where Fritz quickly edged ahead and did not relinquish his lead.

The second set went with serve until the 11th game, when Tsitsipas broke, going on to take the set 7-5.

Fritz broke twice in the third set to edge ahead and repeated the feat in the fourth set, winning the last four games to claim victory.

American 12th seed Taylor Fritz and defending champion Novak Djokovic **PHOTO: X**

Coco Gauff **PHOTO: PTI**

Novak Djokovic was ruthless in a 6-0, 6-0, 6-3 win over Adrian Mannarino on Sunday, reaching the Australian Open quarterfinals and matching Roger Federer's all-time Grand Slam record.

In a rare daytime appearance on Rod Laver Arena, the 10-time Australian Open champion hit 31 winners and raced to victory in an hour and 44 minutes to progress to the last eight for the 58th time at a major, equaling Federer's record.

Djokovic is into the Australian Open quarterfinals for the 14th time, which is equal second on the all-time list with Rafael Nadal and John Newcombe. The difference is that he's converted most of those quarterfinal runs into titles at Melbourne Park.

He'll next face No. 12 Taylor Fritz, who reached the Australian Open quarterfinals for the first time with a 7-6 (3), 5-7, 6-3, 6-3 win over Stefanos Tsitsipas, the runner-up here last year.

Sabalenka **PHOTO: PTI**

"Last couple of days have been really good," he said. "It's going in a positive direction, health-wise, tennis-wise." Defending champion Aryna Sabalenka and US Open winner Coco Gauff cruised into the women's quarterfinals with commanding wins.

Aryna Sabalenka and Coco Gauff advanced to the quarter-finals of the Australian Open on Sunday, securing straight-sets victories.

In Melbourne, defending champion Sabalenka displayed her dominant form once again, overpowering unseeded Amanda Anisimova at Margaret Court Court Arena with a convincing 6-3, 6-2 triumph. Meanwhile, fourth seed Gauff, aiming to replicate Naomi's feat of winning a Grand Slam in Australia following a US title, showcased her impressive performance.

She breezed past Poland's unseeded Magdalena Frech with 63 minutes on Rod Laver Arena, with the 85-year tennis legend witnessing the match from the stands.

"There is nobetter court in Australia than Rod Laver," said 19-year-old Gauff, who had never progressed beyond the fourth round at Melbourne Park in four previous attempts.

"It was an honor to play in front of you, so thank you for coming to coming to my match." —*AP*

Virat Kohli and Sunil Gavaskar **PHOTO: PTI**

We have Viratball to counter Bazball: Gavaskar

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

Indian great Sunil Gavaskar has backed Viratball to counter England's much talked about Bazball approach in the five-Test series beginning in Hyderabad on 25 January. England's batting lineup has embraced an ultra-aggressive style often associated with their head coach Brendon McCullum's approach towards the game in his playing days. The way he (Virat Kohli) has been batting his movement looks good.

With the form that he's in we have Viratball to counter Bazball" Gavaskar told Star Sports. Kohli who is 152 runs short of joining the 9000-run club in Test cricket will be India's batting mainstay. He has 29 fifties and 30 centuries in 113 matches."Yeah, conversion means having more hundreds than fifties. With Kohli, he has a similar amount of hundreds and fifties which means he has a good conversion rate Gavaskar said.England drew their previous series against India at home. However, hosts India unbeaten in a Test series since their 1-2 loss to England in the 2012-2013 season remain a formidable opponent.They just want to play attacking cricket no matter the situation. It'll be interesting to see if this approach works against the spinners of India "Gavaskar added. —*PTI*

- England's Harry Brook will miss the five-match Test series against India as the middle-order batsman will return home with immediate effect because of personal reasons the ECB announced on Sunday.

Gukesh outplays Warmerdam and moves to joint lead

WIJK AAN ZEE, 21 JAN

Indian GM D Gukesh overwhelmed Dutch player Max Warmerdam for his third victory on the trot and elevated himself to a joint lead after the seventh round of the Tata Steel Masters Chess tournament here on Sunday. With this result, Gukesh took his tally to 4.5 points out of a possible seven and now shares the lead alongside Nodirbek Abdusattarov of Uzbekistan and overnight sole leader Anish Giri of the Netherlands.The beginning of the second half also brought cheers in the Vidit Gujrathi camp as he scored his first win in the tournament at the expense of Firouza Alireza of France. The victory helped Gujrathi move to joint fourth spot on four points along with compatriot R Praggnanandhaa and Alireza. Praggnanadhaa played out a draw with Jorden Van Foreest of hosts but Giri suffered a rare defeat at the hands of Abdusattarov. Gukesh was surprised early in the opening of his clock was any indication. —*PTI*

Raiza-Gurjoat pair wins bronze in skeet mixed team in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, 21 JAN

Young Raiza Dhillon who had secured a Paris Olympics quota for India partnered with Gurjoat Khangura to clinch a bronze in the skeet mixed team event and pick up her third medal of the Asia Olympic Qualification Shotgun competition here on Sunday.

The Indian pair outshot local favourites Abdullah Alrashidi and Eman Al Shama 41-39 in the second bronze medal match. The 19-year-old Raiza had won a silver and a Paris Olympic berth in the women's skeet individual event on Saturday as did Anantjeet Singh Naruka in men's skeet.

Raiza Dhillon **PHOTO: PTI**

Raiza had also won the women's skeet team gold. India concluded the competition with one gold three silver and four bronze medals for a fourth-place finish in the overall standings. The skeet mixed team event will make its debut in the Paris Olympics and India has done quite well in the build-up to it.

The pair of Mairaj Ahmad Khan and Ganemat Sekhon had picked up gold in the Cairo World Cup stage last year. In Kuwait on Sunday Raiza and Gurjoat did well to pick up a bronze.

Raiza and Gurjoat tallied 138 in the 17-pair qualification round out of a possible 150 and just about made the second bronze match-up. There they faced the Kuwaiti legend Alrashidi and his partner Eman. The Indians began the final well staying in the lead after the first two series but the Kuwaitis fought back to go ahead. —*PTI*

Atherton feels India's spinners will win it for them

LONDON, 21 JAN

Former England captain Michael Atherton reckons India's superior spin attack will win them the five-Test home series against Ben Stokes and Co. The first Test begins in Hyderabad on Thursday. England decided to prepare for the tour in Abu Dhabi rather than playing a tour game in India. Only Jack Leach is a seasoned spinner in the England squad with the others being the inexperienced Tom Hartley Shoaib Bashir and Rehan Ahmed. —*AP*

McBurnie earns Sheffield a point against West Ham

DOHA, 21 JAN

scored a penalty 12 minutes into stoppage time to salvage a 2-2 draw for Sheffield United against West Ham in a chaotic climax at Bramall Lane on Sunday.

Both sides were also shown red cards in injury time as West Ham threw away the chance to close to within six points of the top four.

Twice David Moyes' men led through Maxwel Cornet and James Ward-Prowse's penalty.

But Ben Brereton Diaz's strike on his Premier League debut for the Blades and McBurnie's late spot-kick edged them to within seven points of safety.

SMcBurnie's late spot-kick edged them to within seven pointthe match **PHOTO: AP**

The visitors were without the injured Lucas Paqueta and Michail Antonio, suspended Said Benrahma and Mohammed Kudus, who is representing Ghana at the Africa Cup of Nations.

Their absence was felt as West Ham failed to gain control of the game in blustery conditions. —*AP*

Mumbai FC beat Chennaiyin FC 1-0

BHUBANESWAR, 21 JAN

Mumbai City FC rode on Hmingthanmawia's first-half strike to defeat Chennaiyin FC 1-0 in a Group C match and make it to the semi-finals of the Super Cup football tournament here on Sunday. Hmingthanmawia struck the all-important goal in the 24th minute. The highlight of the match was Mumbai City goalkeeper Phurba Tempa Lachenpa's performance as he made numerous saves to secure the win for his side. Mumbai City thus finished at the top of their group with nine points after winning all their three games. Chennaiyin FC settled for the second spot with four points from one win one draw and one loss. Petr Kratky's Mumbai City will either face Odisha FC or FC Goa in their last-four clash on Wednesday. —*PTI*

Mumbai City defeats Chennaiyin **PHOTO: PTI**

Pakistan beats NZ by 42 runs in 5th T20I, avoid series sweep

CHRISTCHURCH, 22 JAN

Pakistan had an unlikely hero as it bowled New Zealand out for 92 to win the fifth Twenty20 International by 42 runs Sunday and avoid a clean sweep in the five-match series.

The tourists' total of 134-8 after choosing to bat looked inadequate as it was their lowest of the series after their losing efforts of 180, 173, 179-7, and 158-5 in the four previous matches.

But, it proved more than enough on a sub-standard pitch at Hagley, and New Zealand only just surpassed its previous lowest total in a T20 International in New Zealand.

Iftikhar Ahmed was the surprise hero for Pakistan. The 33-year-old hadn't bowled in Pakistan's last eight Twenty20s, hadn't taken a wicket since 2022,

Iftikhar Ahmed **PHOTO: PTI**

and had only four wickets in 53 matches before Sunday.

But, he thrived on a pitch that gripped and turned as he took three for 11 to play the leading role in New Zealand's downfall. His previous best was one for seven.

Pakistan 134 for 8 (Rizwan 38, Fakhar 33, Southee 2-19, Sodhi 2-22) beat New Zealand 92 (Phillips 26, Allen 22, Iftikhar 3-24, Nawaz 2-18) by 42 runs. —*AP*

INDIA OPEN

Satwiksairaj-Chirag Shetty finish runners-up

NEW DELHI, 21 JAN

Home favourites Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty went down in a tense final against world champions Kang Min Hyuk and Seo Sang Jae at India Open settling for their second successive runners-up finish here Sunday.

Satwik and Chirag the Asian Games champions lost 21-15 11-21 18-21 to Kang and Seo after the two pairs fought for 65 minutes in what was some breath-taking badminton at the KD Jadhav Indoor stadium here.

The Indian duo which won the 2022 edition had finished second best at the Malaysia Super 1000 last week as well.

Satwik and Chirag always had tough matches against their Korean rivals though they boasted a 4-1 head-to-head count in five meetings coming into the match with the latest being at the Malaysia Open last week.

The Indian duo played some breath-taking rallies displaying amazing reflexes as they kept the Korean pair under the pump with some relentless hitting in the opening game.

Chirag dazzled in the front court with some brilliant net interceptions as the duo led 11-9 and soon jumped to 19-13 after the break before pocketing the game when the Koreans netted a shot.

The Indian pair made a sloppy start in the second falling behind 1-5 but a change of pace and angled returns helped them make it 5-7 with Satwik standing tall at the front court and producing a net kill.

A couple of net errors from Chirag during flat exchanges gave the Koreans a six-point advantage.

The Koreans defended well while India's attack seemed to lose a bit of sting as Kang and Seo grabbed a 10-point advantage at 15-5. Kang stepped up with his serve and showed good variations. The Koreans held 10 game points and they converted in the second chance to roar back into the contest.

Satwik and Chirag always had tough matches against their Korean rivals though they boasted a 4-1 head-to-head count in five meetings coming into the match **PHOTO: PTI**

- Home favourites Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty went down in a tense final against world champions Kang Min Hyuk and Seo Sang Jae at India Open settling for their second successive runners-up finish here Sunday.

In the decider, the Koreans kept a high tempo with Kang flying across the front court as they led 9-5. The Koreans didn t allow the Indians to play their attacking game.

Another exciting rally ensued with the Indians finding the net as Kang and Seo grabbed a five-point cushion at the interval.

After the change of sides, Satwik stepped up at the front court as the momentum seemed to change in India's favor with the Korean committing a service error and then finding the net.

—*PTI*